

3V  
637  
R36  
1985

# **INNER VITALITY, OUTWARD VIGOR:**

**The Missional Urban Church**

**William E. Ramsden  
and  
Kinmoth W. Jefferson  
with  
Rene O. Bideaux**

**National Program Division  
General Board of Global Ministries  
The United Methodist Church**

LIBRARY  
CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
1325 N. COLLEGE AVE.  
CLAREMONT, CA 91711-3199

**ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The National Program Division wishes to acknowledge with gratitude the invaluable assistance of the Office of Urban Ministries for the initiation and conduct of this study, and in particular the Rev. Kinmoth W. Jefferson, who contributed substantially to the conception of the project and without whose continuing cooperation and coordination this effort would not have reached completion. Thanks go also to Ms. Marjorie Lutz and the support staff of the Office of Urban Ministries for seeing the manuscript through to publication.

For the actual carrying out of the study, we are indebted to the Rev. William E. Ramsden, whose services as principal writer and researcher have been responsible for obtaining and presenting this knowledge in usable form.

In addition, thanks are extended to the United Methodist jurisdictional urban network leaders for their suggestions and follow-through in identifying missional urban churches and facilitating the survey process, and to the pastors of the profile churches for their generous cooperation and contribution of time and spirit.

—Rene O. Bideaux  
Deputy General Secretary  
National Program Division  
General Board of Global Ministries

© 1985 by National Program Division  
General Board of Global Ministries  
The United Methodist Church

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
<b>I. Overview .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>II. Strong Metropolitan Congregations .....</b>	<b>13</b>
Warren, Pittsburgh.....	14
First-Centenary, Chattanooga.....	17
Holman, Los Angeles.....	20
First Korean, Chicago.....	24
<b>III. Small Congregations .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Faith, Denver .....	28
Lents, Portland .....	31
Edge Hill, Nashville.....	33
<b>IV. Congregations Making Ethnic Transition     through Evolution.....</b>	<b>37</b>
Calvary, Detroit .....	38
Shepard, Columbus .....	42
Wesley, Coral Gables .....	44
First, Wilmington, Los Angeles .....	47
<b>V. Ethnic Transition through Starting     New Congregations .....</b>	<b>51</b>
Native American, Los Angeles.....	52
Tulsa Indian, Tulsa.....	55
Mid-Hudson Hispanic Ministry, Newburgh.....	58
<b>VI. Congregations Revitalized through     Transition .....</b>	<b>61</b>
First, Germantown, Philadelphia .....	62
Trinity, Atlanta.....	66
Pearl, Omaha .....	69
<b>VII. Congregations Responding to     Gentrification .....</b>	<b>74</b>
Lafayette Park, St. Louis .....	75
St. John's, Baltimore.....	78
<b>VIII. Cooperative Parishes .....</b>	<b>83</b>
Inner City Parish, Des Moines.....	85
Kensington Area Ministry, Philadelphia .....	88
East Dallas Cooperative Parish, Dallas .....	93

## INTRODUCTION

**U**rban ministry was prominent in all Christian church denominations' work in the 1960s, but it often suffered from faddism: that is, as word spread of a creative new ministry in one place, many others thought the same program would work for them as well. By the 1970s, it was realized that such transplant efforts were rarely successful. Unfortunately, the new realism was accompanied by fewer resources to invest in urban work. So the outcome was a "backing away" from the effort to provide models in favor of encouraging the creative and helping to sustain the dogged.

But the work of the creative and the dogged (both the doggedly creative and the creatively dogged) have been productive, and we may now venture a new approach to sharing models. Knowledgeable people can identify churches and cooperative parishes that are particularly effective in cities. By indicating their specific situation and nature and by producing simple profile analyses of their ministries, stimulating concepts and options are given to those who labor in similar vineyards. Furthermore, investigation reveals some key common characteristics of effective urban ministries.

This work reports just such a study, performed for the Office of Urban Ministries of the National Program Division, United Methodist General Board of Global Ministries. It is the result of nominations of effective ministries by leaders in the Jurisdictional Urban Ministries Networks related to the office. Of the hundred or so nominations received with comments indicating why the success was noteworthy, 22 churches and cooperative parishes were selected for this study. The selection attempted to represent the key dimensions identified by the leaders, as well as geographic, size, ethnic, and situational variety.

A telephone interview was conducted with the pastor of each of the nominated ministries, and a profile was drafted based on that interview. The profile was then sent to the pastor for suggested corrections. After these suggestions had been incorporated, the profiles were compared to identify common features and shared situations. These were further reviewed to determine a cluster of key features that seemed present in all, or enough to warrant treatment as general insights.

The eight sections following this introduction contain the results of the study.

Section One gives an overview of the eight general insights: it represents the collaboration of the Rev. Rene Bideaux with the primary investigator.

The next two sections deal with easily identifiable types of churches.

Section Two summarizes common features and presents profiles of four congregations that use their strengths for significant mission and ministry.

Section Three contains results and profiles of three missionally effective small churches.

Many urban churches have been affected by transitional neighborhoods, including several of the churches in this study. Four sections detail four specific types of situations that seem to be quite distinct.

Section Four deals with congregations facing ethnic transition and responding in an evolutionary way. Several key learnings are manifest, and the profiles of the four churches are instructive.

Section Five reports profiles of three new ethnic minority congregations developed in response to community transition, noting common key characteristics found in those churches.

Section Six focuses on three congregations that were able to use the experience of community transition to revitalize and transform themselves.

Section Seven deals with the special transitional situation of gentrification. Two churches are profiled, and the common elements in their quite different approaches are described.

Section Eight deals with another distinctive ministry, the cooperative parish. Three were included in the study. Their profiles and the key learnings from them are included.

With this arrangement, readers can either select all types of situations or turn to profiles that apply to situations most like their own. Probably the best approach to find clues to your own ministry is to read the overview, then the summary of the section that seems to deal most closely with your ministry, then to select and read the profiles in that section that seem most appropriate.

The following table is a guide to discover the most applicable profiles. Each section lists the various profiles by some key characteristic, in addition to those used to group them into the sections. Section One lists all congregations and parishes according to the geographical focus of their ministry. Section Two lists all congregations by membership size. Section Three lists congregations and parishes by ethnic composition. Section Four lists all congregations and parishes as they present good examples of various emphases in church life.

The table lists the category in the first column, the congregation or parish in the second column, the city in which it is located in the third column, and the page on which its profile is found in the fourth column.

## TABLE: KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF PROFILES

Use to determine which ones apply to your situation

### SECTION ONE: FOCUS OF MINISTRY

Focus	Congregation	City	Page
<b>Metro-politan</b>	Warren	Pittsburgh	14
	First-Centenary	Chattanooga	17
	Holman	Los Angeles	20
	First Korean	Chicago	24
	Native American	Los Angeles	52
	Tulsa Indian	Tulsa	55
	First, Germantown	Philadelphia	62
<b>City Area</b>	Faith	Denver	28
	Lents	Portland	31
	Edge Hill	Nashville	33
	Calvary	Detroit	38
	Shepard	Columbus	42
	Wesley	Coral Gables	44
	First, Wilmington	Los Angeles	47
	Lafayette Park	St. Louis	75
	East Dallas Coop. Parish	Dallas	93
<b>Inner City</b>	Trinity	Atlanta	66
	Pearl	Omaha	69
	St. John's	Baltimore	78
	Inner City Parish	Des Moines	85
	Kensington Area Ministry	Philadelphia	88
<b>Smaller City</b>	Mid-Hudson Hispanic Min.	Newburgh	58

### SECTION TWO: CHURCH SIZE (only congregations listed)

Size	Congregation	City	Page
<b>Under 200 members</b>	Faith	Denver	28
	Lents	Portland	31
	Native American	Los Angeles	52
	Tulsa Indian	Tulsa	55
	Mid-Hudson Hispanic Min.	Newburgh	58

[These last four churches are relatively new and growing, so their small size is more a function of age than of style.]

<b>200-500 members</b>	First Korean	Chicago	24
	Edge Hill	Nashville	33
	Calvary	Detroit	38
	Wesley	Coral Gables	44
	First, Wilmington	Los Angeles	47
	Trinity	Atlanta	66

	Pearl	Omaha	69
	Lafayette Park	St. Louis	75
<b>500-900 members</b>	Warren	Pittsburgh	14
<b>900 or more members</b>	First-Centenary	Chattanooga	17
	Holman	Los Angeles	20
	First, Germantown	Philadelphia	62

### SECTION THREE: ETHNIC COMPOSITION

<b>Composition</b>	<b>Congregation</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Page</b>
<b>Predominantly White Anglo</b>	First-Centenary	Chattanooga	17
<b>Less than 10% Ethnic Minorities</b>	Lafayette Park	St. Louis	75
	E. Dallas Coop. Parish	Dallas	93
<b>Predominantly White Anglo 10% - 25% Ethnic Minorities</b>	Edge Hill	Nashville	33
	First, Germantown	Philadelphia	62
	Trinity	Atlanta	66
<b>White Anglo Virtually No Ethnic Minorities</b>	Faith	Denver	28
	Lents	Portland	31
	*Inner City Parish	Des Moines	85
	*Kensington Area Min.	Philadelphia	88
<b>Black</b>	Warren	Pittsburgh	14
	Holman	Los Angeles	20
	Calvary	Detroit	38
	*Inner City Parish	Des Moines	85
<b>Hispanic</b>	Wesley	Coral Gables	44
	Mid-Hudson Hispanic Min.	Newburgh	58
	*Kensington Area Min.	Philadelphia	88
<b>Korean</b>	First Korean	Chicago	24
<b>Native American</b>	Native American	Los Angeles	52
	Tulsa Indian	Tulsa	55
<b>Predominantly Black, Some White</b>	Shepard	Columbus	42
	*Kensington Area Min.	Philadelphia	88
<b>Black/White</b>	Pearl	Omaha	69
	St. John's	Baltimore	78
<b>Multi-Ethnic</b>	First, Wilmington	Los Angeles	47

\*Parishes are included when any church in one fits the category.

## SECTION FOUR: OTHER SPECIAL EMPHASES/LEARNING

Emphasis	Congregation	City	Page
<b>Effective EMLCs</b>	Warren	Pittsburgh	14
	Holman	Los Angeles	20
	First Korean	Chicago	24
	Calvary	Detroit	38
	Wesley	Coral Gables	44
	Native American	Los Angeles	52
	Tulsa Indian	Tulsa	55
	Mid-Hudson Hispanic Min.	Newburgh	58
<b>Inclusive</b>	Edge Hill	Nashville	33
	Shepard	Columbus	42
	First, Wilmington	Los Angeles	47
	Trinity	Atlanta	66
	Pearl	Omaha	69
	St. John's	Baltimore	78
<b>Revitalization</b>	Warren	Pittsburgh	14
	Faith	Denver	28
	Lents	Portland	31
	Wesley	Coral Gables	44
	Mid-Hudson Hispanic Min.	Newburgh	58
	Trinity	Atlanta	66
	Pearl	Omaha	69
	Lafayette Park	St. Louis	75
	Inner City Parish	Des Moines	85
	Kensington Area Min.	Philadelphia	88
	E. Dallas Coop. Parish	Dallas	93
<b>Ongoing Renewal</b>	First-Centenary	Chattanooga	17
	Holman	Los Angeles	20
	Edge Hill	Nashville	33
	First, Germantown	Philadelphia	62
<b>Community Outreach Ministries</b>	First-Centenary	Chattanooga	17
	Holman	Los Angeles	20
	First Korean	Chicago	24
	Faith	Denver	28
	Edge Hill	Nashville	33
	Calvary	Detroit	38
	First, Germantown	Philadelphia	62
	Lafayette Park	St. Louis	75
	St. John's	Baltimore	78
	Inner City Parish	Des Moines	85
	Kensington Area Min.	Philadelphia	88
	E. Dallas Coop. Parish	Dallas	93

[All churches in the study had strong community outreach; these are listed as good examples for study and special ministries.]

## Section I

# Overview

**T**he sample was deliberately chosen to provide a wide spread of examples, ethnically, geographically, historically, and in terms of size. However, other clear “spreads” emerged in the interviews. There was great theological diversity. There were many differences of styles and points of focus in ministry. Even the definitions of community varied in different situations. And, of course, there was a wide spread in age and education of the clergy. These differences occurred among and within the parishes as well.

Beside and within the diversity, *certain common characteristics did emerge that deserve at least tentative status as principles of effective congregational development and mission in the city.*

**1. THE PROCESSES OF CONGREGATIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND MISSION TO COMMUNITY ARE LINKED.** The church does not give exclusive attention to internal and institutional needs and does not use the rationalization, “First we have to build ourselves up, then we can do something about the needs around us.” On the other hand, the Christian church does not operate as a *de facto* community center. Outreach and membership development should be worked on together, and preference seems to go to strategies that help meet both goals simultaneously. There is a strong trend toward selecting issues and strategies that specific churches can best handle, i.e., larger churches tackle larger problems than do smaller churches, but all seek to use to the best advantage the points of leverage they have in their social situation. These usually reflect the history of contacts and alliances the church has built, the involvements and connections of its members, and the connections possible through conference and sometimes ecumenical agencies.

**2. THE CHURCH HAS MADE A COMMITMENT TO ITS COMMUNITY.** In some cases, this commitment involved a decision not to move the church building—or simply consistent efforts to improve its property as a contribution to the community. In the case of Hispanic (especially in smaller cities) and Asian churches, the commitment might be shown in a

willingness to move closer to where the ethnic community (as defined by ethnic presence) is moving or to be accessible to it. In all cases, commitment was evidenced in styles of worship and a program appropriate to the community being served, and in outreach programs directed toward critical issues in the community.

3. THE CONGREGATION WAS OPEN TO STRANGERS/VISITORS AND APPRECIATIVE OF NEWCOMERS. This phenomenon is the social/psychological equivalent of commitment to the community—people feel welcome. It is an essential condition for membership development. Openness and friendliness appear as essentials in all studies on factors determining church growth. A special aspect of this factor is evident in the urban churches: i.e., for the future of the church, not particularly money, but new ideas, fresh vision and energy are essential.

4. THE CHURCH, AND ITS PASTOR, HAVE A SOLID SENSE OF VISION FOR THE DIRECTION OF THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY AND FUTURE, AND FOR ITS SPECIAL PLACE AMONG THE CHURCHES IN ITS COMMUNITY (OR ITS CONFERENCE). These churches tended to see themselves as different from most churches, and had strong, positive feelings about themselves as carriers of that difference. They saw themselves as having a distinctive mission to perform in their city. They were confident of their future in that mission. Sometimes, this confidence reflected years of strong performance of that mission (or of the missions from which it evolved); other times, the confidence was rooted more singly in the hope and faith of the people in God as the giver of that mission, even without very much accumulation of signs of "success" to validate their hope.

5. Whether confidence was based on performance, or hope based on venture in faith, THESE CHURCHES AND THEIR PASTORS WERE ABLE TO ARTICULATE THEIR MISSION AND MINISTRY WITH A THEOLOGICAL FOUNDATION. The theologies used varied, as did the particulars of emphases and styles in mission. We found varying levels of theological pluralism within congregations, and much more widely varying pluralism among congregations. We found that congregations that are vital and viable have a sound theological foundation from which they work. Indeed, the theological emphasis was either a central part of the church's sense of distinctiveness, or a key aspect of relating effectively to community persons whom they were seeking to

serve. These were "Wesleyan" theologies that had practical consequences in ministry, not just intellectual constructs.

**6. THE PASTORS WERE ALL ABLE TO THINK, SPEAK AND LIVE WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THEIR CHURCH'S THEOLOGY.** Some pastors had been there long enough to be the primary shaping force of the theology. Others were able to step right into ongoing direction. Some were able to do some "shaping" of direction within an overall framework. All were able to work with and articulate the Christian faith and witness so that their members were able to respond. Even more, the pastors presented a style of ministry appropriate to the community and to the potential future congregation of their church. They served as appropriate symbols for the present life of the church or for its future potential (the former in churches in a positive situation, the latter in churches in transition).

**7. THE PASTORS HAD MADE A COMMITMENT TO THEIR CHURCH AND TO ITS COMMUNITY.** This commitment was expressed in three ways: a) tenure, b) parsonage, and c) focus of ministry. Some of the pastors were involved in all three ways. For some, especially in the more "area" or "metropolitan" churches, location of the parsonage is not significant in the way it is for a more neighborhood-oriented church. Though most of the pastors had been at their present church for at least five years, some were of relatively recent tenure. These pastors found other ways to express their commitment. One had returned to a church previously served. Another moved quickly to purchase a home in the neighborhood, rather than live in the parsonage which was several miles away. All focused their ministry on that congregation and its mission. While two of the churches were served by bi-vocational and thus part-time pastors, and another had started its revitalization with a part-time student pastor, none had become vital while yoked with other churches in a circuit.

**8. CHURCHES DID BETTER WHEN THEY HAD A SENSE OF OWNERSHIP OF THEIR MINISTRY.** For ethnic churches this issue focused on the question of building; many such churches carry on their worship and program as tenants of white Anglo congregations. Those that felt best about themselves were either using space dedicated to them within the other congregation's building or were looking forward to having space of their own as part of their planning for their future. It was even better, of course, if they already had their own building. For smaller churches, the question focused more on Annual Conference aid.

Those that saw themselves as paying their own way felt best about themselves and consequently were most able to be in mission and attract potential members. Help from conference or other sources to aid special outreach programs did not seem to diminish this sense. Equitable salary and other assistance with the central core of costs for church ministry has a negative impact on the sense of ownership. All the other churches in the sample also felt ownership to be a serious issue for them. Therefore the principle deserves tentative recognition as general, although its primary thrust is for ethnic and smaller churches that have the most severe struggles to achieve ownership.

All these eight points will be made manifest in the analyses of each of the seven types of situations and in many of the individual congregation and parish profiles.

## Strong Metropolitan Congregations

**F**our of the churches in the study were primarily examples of the way in which a strong metropolitan church can reach out in community service and at the same time sustain and increase its own institutional strength. Warren, in Pittsburgh, over a century old, has long been one of the major churches of that city's black community. First-Centenary in Chattanooga is a merger of two churches that were downtown churches for a long time, one a major church in size and influence at the time of merger.

First Korean in Chicago and Holman in Los Angeles are examples of primarily ethnic churches that were established at the beginning of the real growth of ethnic communities in their metropolitan areas. Their early success has been capitalized on for continuing growth and outreach. First, Germantown (Philadelphia) can also be seen in this category, but its primary relevance is in revitalization through transition (see Section 5). Before reviewing the profile of each of those four churches, let us note the key factors for effective mission and ministry that seem to be present in all:

1. They are and have been blessed with strong leadership, both pastoral and lay.
2. Each is attractive to many people who are recognized leaders in the community served by the church.
3. All have displayed a consistently clear understanding of themselves as metropolitan, rather than as neighborhood congregations, in their basic character. This has shaped their vision and actions in identifying sources of new members and action arenas for community betterment.
4. Conversely, each also has a special sense of service to the immediate neighborhood around the church's building. While this sense is clearly a part of the church's mission outreach, it has the added effect of giving an identity to the congregation that helps attract members from all over the metropolitan area.

5. Each has had a tradition of a strong pulpit, with a style of proclamation particularly suited to the people to whom the church ministers. Further, these strong pulpits are used tellingly as advocacy "sounding boards."
6. All four, regardless of their ethnic predominance (two black, one white, one Korean), have affirmed their own ethnic identity, while still being willing to reach out to make connections beyond that identity.
7. They produce strong programs, and are open to introducing changes, even major ones, to respond to emerging needs and perceptions.
8. All have a strong stewardship emphasis, not only in building the understanding and giving of members, but also in their approach to outreach.
9. Finally, all have been able to build on their strong institutional foundations: size, visibility, image. Their current attractiveness for members as well as their capacity to advocate or act seem to require that foundation.

## **Warren United Methodist Church, Pittsburgh**

### **A. Profile**

Warren Church is over one hundred years old (origin, 1880) and has been the leading black United Methodist church in Pittsburgh for decades. It has a tradition of strong clergy who provided strong ministries. Its laity were active leaders in Annual Conference. Members had very strong pride in their church; some remember fondly that people even mortgaged their homes to help the church in the past. Warren's numerical and psychological peak came in the years 1940 to 1960, when membership exceeded 1,000.

In the following years, some deterioration set in. One source was the shift of the more affluent black community out of the Hill District where the church was located to other parts of the city, thus reducing in-migration of new families that could be recruited for membership. Aging lay leadership did not provide as strong direction or as tight organization as had been the case previously. For instance, failure to pay taxes led to loss of some adjoining property that would now help to provide needed parking and/or expansion space.

In the last five or so years, the pattern has begun to

improve. Membership is again on the increase; dynamic lay leadership is developing among younger members (who are actively encouraged by the older leaders), and the church has been adjusting to the changes in its community. Members now come from all over, especially from the Hill District and the neighboring East End (still almost 50 percent white) and from nearby suburbs which are gaining substantial black populations. Primary channels are Warren's own confirmation classes and United Methodists moving to Pittsburgh who transfer their membership. The relatively up-scale socio-economic historic character of the church is basically continuing in these new members. On the other hand, Warren is active in outreach—both in seeking to develop ways to reach the many unchurched people around it and in ministering to the needs of poorer people in its neighborhood.

Joe McMahon is the full-time pastor. Other staff include a student assistant, a secretary and a financial secretary (who are the equivalent of one full-time position between them), a custodian who is on Social Security, and part-time people in the music area (organist-director and directors of a Youth and a Gospel Choir).

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. People remain active in the life of the church and encourage others to relate, even after they have moved away from the immediate neighborhood.

2. Membership grows, especially as people move into the metropolitan area.

3. The congregation is becoming a little younger, as young and middle age adults replace older members who are dying.

4. Younger people and middle-aged adults are assuming greater responsibility for leadership, using their special talents on behalf of the church.

5. Warren has a Gospel Choir which helps lead services once a month, as well as a Youth Choir and a community Boys' Choir.

6. Stewardship is improving, with a special emphasis on tithing and proportional giving. The annual budget of well over \$100,000 is being met. There is a three-year emphasis on capital improvements, on a pay-as-you-go basis which has produced many improvements and \$37,000 in a renovation fund.

7. The church is developing special materials and methods

to reach out to unchurched adults, to call them into the Christian faith and into the church. It recognizes that its traditional worship needs to add more "oomph" to meet their needs (the new Gospel Choir is a step toward meeting that need).

8. Leaders are supportive of the pastor in his preaching and teaching emphasis on the church's role in transcending social class.

### **C. Impact on the Community**

1. The church operates a senior citizens program for the community as well as its own members.

2. It maintains a fund to help with emergency needs for food, etc.

3. An educational center planned as part of the renovation program will be used as a base for intentional outreach to the unchurched.

4. Warren Church is supportive of other agencies seeking to help people in its area, e.g., East End Cooperative, Good Will.

5. The pastor and many of the laity serve on the boards of advocacy groups such as NAACP, Urban League and OIC (Opportunities Industrialization Corporation): the church receives special offerings for their support.

6. The Hill District is now a good candidate for gentrification (the movement of middle-class people into deteriorating or recently-renewed city areas). The church is working with neighborhood groups and with a local savings and loan association to try to prevent the displacement of poor people who live there.

### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Effective pastoral leadership. The church is responding very positively to McMahon's maturity and competence. His own example as a tither is a major part of the stewardship development. His emphases in making preaching a means of communicating *with* (not just *to*) the people are helping to encourage openness and mutual support.

2. Black church-going patterns and the Pittsburgh transportation/highway network combine to support a pattern of affiliation that draws people from all over the area.

3. The church's strong present program combined with its traditions of visibility and importance additionally attract people from all around the area.

4. Good lay leadership has been critical in the period of revitalization:

a. Key old-line leaders have been supportive of McMahon's effort to shape the church for the future, and McMahon has been good at working with them and overcoming any tendencies toward contentiousness.

b. New members coming in have been willing to undertake leadership responsibilities. There has been a "ladder" of responsibilities allowing fast involvement and growing authority.

c. Older leaders have been supportive of the newer leaders.

5. The church still had great institutional strength when it began the period of revitalization, so it could devote substantial resources of time, effort, creativity, money, etc.

Contact: The Rev. Joseph McMahon  
Warren United Methodist Church  
2604 Centre Ave.  
Pittsburgh, PA 15219  
412/621-2253

## **First-Centenary United Methodist Church, Chattanooga**

### **A. Profile**

First-Centenary is a classic "downtown" church. Its immediate area had been largely populated by poor people, who were in turn almost completely displaced by nonresidential office buildings and a university. Two congregations merged in 1967 (2,500-member Centenary, former Methodist Episcopal South, and 250-member First, former Methodist Episcopal). With merger, a new church was built, filling a block in the center of the city. The full \$4.5 million cost was paid off in ten years. A TV studio, theatres, a youth facility, and seminar rooms are included in the modern Gothic structure.

The church's real community is metropolitan Chattanooga, the 17th most industrialized city in the country. Heavily dependent on the auto industry, Chattanooga has experienced severe employment cutbacks in recent years and slowed immigration. Several retirement centers are nearby, and the university with 9,000 students is immediately adjacent to the church. Chattanooga tends to be a conservative town; the very wealthy families are conservative in politics, fundamentalist in religion. The city also has strong, prestigious private schools.

In this context, First-Centenary has been diverse in its

attitudes and pluralistic in its expression of the Christian faith. It has focused on growth ministries for individuals to serve as a launching pad for service and action. The church deliberately remained in the center of the city to emphasize service outreach to the poor in its vicinity. It also speaks prophetically and supportively to the issues of the city. With a broad range of special-interest groups and programs, the church has been slowly but steadily increasing in membership and in average attendance at worship (now over 900 weekly). It tends to attract middle-class professionals, usually white, in the 35-55 age range, and somewhat affluent. Large numbers of singles, single parents, and young marrieds are included, but few large families. Since it competes with the multiplicity of other ways city people can spend their time, energy, and money, First-Centenary tends to attract a "consumer group" rather than a "serving group." Thus, it places much emphasis on adult education and on spiritual growth/formation to motivate persons to serve, and it demonstrates service in its outreach ministries.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. Steady growth in membership and attendance.
2. Strong stewardship; \$1.3 million was contributed in 1982 by 920 pledging units.
3. The church school is very vital, averaging almost 800 in attendance.
4. Special singles ministries are thriving—150-175 each Monday evening in a Singles Group, 3 singles Sunday School classes running over 100 weekly, special Bible studies, Grief Group, Divorce Seminars. The mailing list for these groups and the many special activities is over 1,100.
5. The church has a half-hour weekly TV show to tell its story, its faith, and its concerns. This is essentially an edited version of the Sunday morning service.
6. With a staff of 35, there is also a strong group of lay leaders, who feel good about being able to use their job-related skills in church work. With the inevitable tendency of such churches to become dependent on staff, special concern is given to voluntary leadership and to develop skills and commitments needed for people to take responsibility in the life of the church.
7. It is responsive to the emerging needs of its constituencies; e.g., with more younger adult parents, there are increasing numbers of children, so the church (which has been largely

adult-oriented) is making plans for a stronger children and youth ministry, starting with younger children.

### **C. Impact on Community**

1. The church sponsors a variety of inner-city ministries aimed at the poor, predominantly black, population living nearby; 125 children participate regularly in a recreation program (fully paid by the church).

2. It started a community kitchen in cooperation with five other churches, which now serves 140 people per day. A food bank and other emergency aid services are provided in conjunction with the kitchen.

3. The District Urban Committee has its headquarters in the church building.

4. "Caring in Action" is a new program providing personal attention by volunteers to persons referred by cooperating social service agencies. A total of 250 volunteers worked in this program in the last year.

5. Leaders of various civic clubs and such programs as the United Way often come from the membership of First-Centenary.

6. Members try to express their faith by using their positions of power or influence in "the world" to help meet human needs.

7. The continuing presence of the church, its people and its impressive building in the center of the city is a witness to the presence of religious faith in the secular flow of life. This is often commented on by people in the community.

### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Strong and stable pastoral leadership. The present pastor has been there only a few years, but expects and wants to stay some time. His predecessor served for 16 years.

2. Large, diverse and talented staff. At present it includes the senior minister and two key associate ministers (one ordained and one diaconal), a full-time person in youth ministry, a full-time minister of counseling, a full-time church hostess with a kitchen staff of four, as well as persons with special responsibilities for singles ministries, for inner city ministries, for Christian education, a building manager and an office manager.

3. Strong lay leaders who bring appropriate skills to the life of the church.

4. Careful recruitment and development of additional volunteer leaders.

5. The church's image as one committed to and concerned about the city is clear and forceful. It stands in contrast to the more common limitation of religious concern to "individual salvation."

6. The past tradition of success of First-Centenary in its growth and activities creates a positive climate that attracts new participants, encourages confidence in venturing into new ministry, and "succeeds like success."

Contact: Dr. Gordon Goodgame  
First-Centenary United Methodist Church  
P. O. Box 208  
Chattanooga, TN 37401  
615/756-2021

## **Holman United Methodist Church, Los Angeles**

### **A. Profile**

Holman Church was started in 1945 in response to the war and post-war influx of a black population into Los Angeles. Under the leadership of one pastor for 27 years, it expanded steadily with the growing population, reaching out, serving, and attracting many people into membership. Membership peaked about 1966 at 3,300. After that, slowing of the black population growth and the spread of that population changed the church's situation just as leadership inertia curtailed creativity. Membership began to slide, declining to about 2,000 by 1974 (400 names were removed when the rolls were "cleaned" in 1972). There were no youth ministries, few young adults, and very few babies baptized.

A "second generation" of leadership since then renewed the spirit and vitality of the church. Junior and senior high youth fellowships, music, and a children's council were all pushed. Membership has been slowly rising, and now is 2,500. The pastor is baptizing the babies of couples he married. There is a sizable children's choir. A general spirit of the church as one family is growing. Ministry is responsive to developing community needs and issues and to the changing circumstances of the people whose membership it seeks to attract.

The church is 99 percent black. Members come from all over the metropolitan Los Angeles area and from all walks of life, from very affluent professional and executive positions to welfare recipients. People of all ages are joining, from families with infants to those in retirement. Many new members are

from Jamaica or other Caribbean Islands. A growing number are Africans, particularly from West Africa.

The pastor characterizes it as a "catholic congregation that celebrates oneness with diversity." It is pluralist in its practices and in its statements of the nature of faith. It seeks to "serve the whole Gospel—personal salvation, justice, peace, and an end to racism."

Strengthening educational ministries, leadership development, constructing a multi-purpose building for expanded ministries, and deepening of stewardship of time, talent, and treasure are current emphases. The diverse staff has been developed to undergird the needed program and ministry, as well as identification and development of needed new emphases.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. Membership has been growing steadily, with a broad base of attraction.

2. Stewardship has doubled in the last eight years, allowing the church to pay off its United Methodist Development Fund mortgage in 1983 and pay its full Annual Conference and World Service apportionment (making monthly payments).

3. Staff has been added to meet more diverse needs, including 11 part-time people (especially for music ministries); and the church-as-family emphasis shows in the remuneration and packages of benefits provided.

4. There are good feelings between the congregation and the staff. Key officers of the church are good friends with one another and with the staff.

5. Training programs are conducted in all the major groups of the church to facilitate leadership development; these are supplemented by special training events.

6. Nine hundred people are registered in the church's talent bank, which is drawn on for leadership within the church's organizations and for service in its outreach ministries.

7. The church helped establish an Hispanic congregation a block-and-a-half away, and has friendly relations with the Korean Seventh Day Adventist congregation next door.

8. The church and its members are in mission in the community across a broad range of concerns and activities.

### **C. Impact on Community**

1. It is a source of emergency aid to people referred by the city—people of all races and from all over the city. The County Info Line rates Holman as one of the two most reliable sources in the city.

2. Holman is a strong supporter of the farmers' market program to increase employment and provide more reasonably priced food for poorer people. Support has taken financial, political action, and volunteer worker forms.

3. The church is a major base for peace with justice programs in the city. It has its own group, and is a part of the city-wide coalition.

4. Members are encouraged to be active in the political process, with special emphases on encouraging voter registration.

5. The leadership development training, coaching, and experience given to people at the church has enabled many to become more effective in their other activities in the community and on the job and also as decision-makers.

6. The size and strength of the church has been a symbol of the power potential among black people throughout the black community of Los Angeles—and to many white Angelenos as well. The pastor has used this position to raise a powerful voice on community issues which has helped to increase the visibility.

### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Strong pastoral leadership. The founding pastor was able to build on the influx of black population and establish the basic processes that enabled the church to grow rapidly and maintain its large size and strength. The present pastor helped the church to adjust to changed circumstances and build for its future. He is largely responsible for the development of the capable staff, for the strong worship and preaching that are the primary focus and attraction of the church, and for planning to meet emerging needs.

2. Pastoral tenure. The long tenure of the two pastors has given them time to have a major impact on the congregation and on the community.

3. Los Angeles black community. The initial growth of the church was possible because of the large in-migration of black

people. Its more recent growth and diversity stems from the attractiveness of Los Angeles to a wide variety of black people.

4. Strong lay leadership. The church has attracted many people of great gifts, and it has helped many others to bring potential gifts to flower. The commitment of these gifts to the work of the church is a major source of all the programmatic and community outreach efforts. The lay leaders have been responsive to the initiatives of the pastor to expand and diversify staff, to emphasize stewardship and leadership development, and to take an active stance in community outreach. The combination of strong pastoral and strong lay leadership is essential to deepen and strengthen mission and ministry, since Holman faces the barriers to growth and action faced by all large churches: i.e., people joining for social reasons and seeking anonymity, people wanting the staff to do it, and the difficulty of disciplining efforts.

5. Size and visibility. For the recent renewal of the congregation and its outreach, it was critical that leaders were able to build upon the great institutional strength and the community reputation already established. Changes were not seen as revolutionary, but simply new expressions of the on-going commitment of the church.

6. Professional staff. Not only size and diversity are important to Holman's staff, but also its team-work. The clergy staff meets weekly—and has an annual spiritual life retreat. All full-time staff meets monthly, and all part-time workers join them six or seven times a year. In addition, there are many instances of two or more staff members working together on projects and meeting for planning and coordination of those efforts, or of informal get-togethers and unplanned encounters in which ideas and support are exchanged.

Also, lay leadership development is a central responsibility of the staff, both collectively and in each's individual work. The senior minister gives central priority to developing the staff as a whole and encouraging each member to pursue personal development.

7. Recognition that "the city is our parish." In both evangelistic and social action terms, the outreach of Holman is much broader than its immediate neighborhood, and appropriately so. It would not be able to sustain its vitality and institutional strength on the basis of any one neighborhood. Much of its impact in the community comes from its ability to "take on" the city and its needs. Pastoral and lay leadership are able to sustain that vision and implement it in action.

8. Strong worship. The city-wide character of the church necessitates a worship service that attracts people from all over. Thus, preaching, music, liturgy, and all supplementary features around the service must be well done, and at Holman they are.

Contact: The Rev. James M. Lawson, Jr.  
3320 W. Adams  
Los Angeles, CA 90018  
213/731-7285

## **First Korean United Methodist Church, Chicago**

### **A. Profile**

Having recently celebrated its sixtieth anniversary, this is one of the older Korean United Methodist congregations in the U.S. Its members tend to be Korean immigrants within the past ten years when they join, and are usually 30 to 40 years old and have children. The church has always served as a supportive community for persons undergoing the experiences of being transplanted into a strange culture. Not only has it addressed this issue in its internal life, but it has consistently developed special programming to reach out to other Korean in-migrants to help with the emotional/cultural problems and such derivative issues as language training and assistance in finding jobs. The church has operated a Christian Social Center since 1976.

More recently, it has been attracting more and more of second and third generation Korean Americans and is facing up to the consequent needs for bilingual programming. Responding to the special needs of these people is seen by the church as a point of its own growth. Membership, activity, and a spirit of confidence have been increasing. There is a high degree of readiness to take on new problems. The current pastor has served since 1969. One predecessor pastor served from 1935 to 1965.

Since 1973 First Korean has been in its own building (having shared space with Anglo congregations all its earlier years). Its mortgage is with the National Program Division. Since 1977 the church has been financially self-supporting, although earlier it needed and received support from the Annual Conference.

The staff, in addition to the full-time pastor, includes two 20-hour-per-week seminarians, a youth director and a Christian education director (who is a black woman). There are two full-time program people, a lay associate pastor and the director of the social center, plus a full-time secretary and a full-

time custodian. First Korean also has three part-time workers in the music area, sustaining four choirs.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. The congregation is steadily growing, with rising weekly income and paying regularly on the mortgage. The number of regular givers has increased from 15 in 1973 to 380 in 1982, while the amount given rose from \$16,000 to \$280,000.

2. Two-thirds of the members are in attendance on an average Sunday, and there is a lively spirit in the worship service.

3. Members are active in volunteering to work in the Social Center, especially for special occasions.

4. The church is able to address its emerging needs, e.g., youth ministry to bilingual young people, and faith-building for persons coming to the congregation who are largely lacking in Christian understanding and biblical faith.

5. There is a steadily expanding corps of leaders. The pastor is able to identify people with especially strong commitment to faith and the church and to cultivate their skills through personal coaching, to help them assume greater leadership responsibility.

## **C. Impact on Community**

1. The primary community of this church is not a neighborhood, per se, but the community of Koreans living in greater Chicago. Its outreach is focused on meeting the needs of these persons, particularly those who moved to the U.S. recently.

2. The church has developed a playground for children in its immediate neighborhood, which has an increasing Korean population, and is planning to purchase other buildings to expand its programs.

3. The Social Center has provided interpreters, translators, help with job-finding (placement and skill development), and leadership training.

4. First Korean is putting more effort into its youth ministry, especially English-speaking, to meet the needs of second and third generation people.

## **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. A rapidly growing Korean population in greater Chicago, with many present, their numbers slowly but steadily increasing in the immediate neighborhood of the church.

2. Strong pastoral leadership that has been stable in the history of the church. The present pastor, Rev. Cha, is a good manager and a strong preacher. He places heavy emphasis on issues of human rights and social justice in Korea, thus giving a clear and special identity to the church.

3. Owning their own building, in a particularly appropriate location, has helped build congregational morale and simplified the task of attracting new members.

4. Being financially self-supporting similarly contributes to the morale of the congregation—and thus to its attractiveness.

5. As the first Korean United Methodist Church in Chicago it has special “visibility.”

6. The key lay leaders have strong skills and commitment.

7. Conference financial support helped during the period when the church was not self-supporting, and Annual Conference and National Program Division Church Extension aided in securing the present building. However, the church often felt the general church policies they confronted were unfortunately ill-suited to their situation, though things seem to be going better now.

Contact: The Rev. Hyun Hoe Cha  
First Korean United Methodist Church  
4850 N. Bernard St.  
Chicago, IL 60625  
312/463-2742

## Section III

# Small Congregations

Three of the churches in the study are examples of small congregations that have been effective in mission. Faith in Denver and Lents in Portland are traditional small churches in style, though they have been greatly affected by the fact that they almost died. Edge Hill in Nashville is not by any means a traditional church, but it has deliberately elected to stay relatively small, for the values of closeness that smallness brings.

Several key factors are common to these churches:

1. In contrast to the results of studies of small congregations, each of these churches experienced vitalization through strong pastoral leadership. Two factors are really involved:

a) The pastors are effective leaders, able to relate their style and focus to the people, and strongly committed to ministering in and through that congregation;

b) The laity were ready to follow the leadership of the pastors. At Faith and Lents this readiness reflected the prior acceptance by lay leadership that the congregation was going to die and the hope that the new pastor could prevent this from happening. Edge Hill was a new congregation where the pastor was the founding pastor.

2. There is a strong "family" feeling in the congregation. To some degree this reflects the tendency of small churches to be built around a few extended families, but even more it reflects the way in which the members feel about one another and about their church—they "are family."

3. These churches are engaged with community needs, but their style of doing so tends to be personalized. The starting point is perception by one or more of the people of some person or persons with a specific need, unlike the more programmatic starting point of a more generalized perception of a community need. However, the churches do not stop with supplying assistance to the needy person; they go on to address the conditions in the community which are creating or aggravating the need.

4. The Christian theological emphases and style of the pastors are congruent with the congregation's expectations and readiness for growth. Both Faith and Lents pastors characterized their theological approach as somewhat conservative, while Edge Hill's pastor said he was basically "liberal," though uncomfortable with being held to any specifics that label might conjure up for others.

5. While small, these congregations had strong self-esteem and consequent high morale. It is worth noting that none of them is burdened by receipt of a "subsidy."

6. Typical of small congregations, there is strong loyalty by the members for their church.

7. Each church has developed a ministry style appropriate for and attractive to new members in its specific situation. Edge Hill is in a more transient community, so its ministry is much more program-oriented than most small congregations. Lents is in a more stable community, so its style of outreach to new members is more "adoptive." Faith, in an intermediate situation, is in the middle of a critical transformation, seeking to attract and to be of service to more people in its community. It is moving from traditional small church style to the church growth formula of "multiplication by division," i.e., it is developing a more varied program.

## **Faith United Methodist Church, Denver**

### **A. Profile**

When Tom Duckworth was appointed to Faith Church as a student pastor, the church was virtually ready to close. The members were all aging, and little chance for a future was seen. Today, Tom is a full-time appointment there; the church is meeting its monthly financial obligations and has \$10,000 in a money market fund; it has an increasing number of younger adult members. The change partly reflects the transition in its community, as younger families have moved in, buying smaller homes at relatively modest prices they can afford.

Thus, the congregation has essentially two foci of ministry, one caring for the needs of older people and one reaching out to younger adults and their families. The sense of commitment to both foci is essentially shared by all. The style is that of the smaller congregation with a strong "family feeling," but Faith is using planning methods for outreach and for congregation development. Theologically, the church tends toward conservatism, using its biblical orientation as a focus for practicing and living by faith in congregational life and in the

lives of members. It has a good-sized choir and an effective church school.

Faith has identified its primary service area as about one mile around the church, even though there are four other United Methodist churches and several church-related agencies within two miles. About half its members live in that area, though somewhat less than half the lay leadership. A Parish Development Committee organizes community involvement by 1) identifying needs, 2) organizing themselves and the congregation, and 3) doing something. Through its participation in Denver Urban Ministries, the church is involved in community organization and development.

Faith has recently completed a five-year plan, including mission statement, goals, and objectives. Its objectives include: maintaining average attendance at two-thirds of membership, elected leaders at one-third of membership; achieving a 10 percent annual increase in average attendance at both worship and church school; committing 5 percent of the total budget (in addition to apportionments) to mission by 1988; developing more fellowship opportunities and becoming more systematic at leadership development (with job descriptions and a talent bank).

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. The church has undergone a spiritual transformation as members have come to know what faith means and does. They have gone from a stagnant faith to a living faith, from nearly deciding to close to developing a positive, exciting self-image.

2. Younger adults are choosing to relate to the church.

3. The church has for the first time ever established an explicit goal of membership growth.

4. Financial support and stewardship practices are greatly strengthened—from part-time minister to full-time, from recipient of subsidy to planning to increase mission giving beyond apportionments.

5. Intentional planning and ministry development is being conducted within the basic informal, family style of a small church.

6. Faith engages in working relationships and some cooperation with neighboring churches, while maintaining its image as being different.

7. The leaders are identifying the problems that constrict and/or shape their future; e.g., lack of parking, limited size of

their building, increasing age of the older members, and changes in the neighborhood. A nearby Hispanic community is expanding and verging on their area; the proportion of home renters is increasing.

8. Recognizing the need for increased programming, the church needs to—and is able to—divide its Administrative Board and Council on Ministries.

### **C. Impact on Community**

1. Pressure from the church and its neighbors brought results in a week in an effort to get the city to clean up a nearby park.

2. Openness of members to needs of the community and to action allows a flexible response to emerging needs.

3. Rejuvenation of the congregation, and of its property, contributes to the appearance and vitality of the neighborhood.

4. Faith is intentionally involved in larger community action efforts cooperatively with other churches and agencies, especially through Denver Urban Ministries.

5. A ministry of outreach to older people helps make contact with non-members as well as members.

### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Appropriate Pastoral Leadership: Tom's conservative theological style, commitment to people and ministry, lay leadership development by one-to-one cultivation emphasizing spiritual growth rather than skill-development, willingness to assert himself, conviction that "there's always a way," and strong desire to remain in a smaller church.

2. Pastoral stability. Two of Tom's most important contributions came when he agreed to stay full-time when he finished seminary and when he bought a home within a mile and a half of the church.

3. Strong rapport between the pastor and the people.

4. Openness of the old line leaders to the new younger people as members and as leaders. Part of this openness was won through resolution of strong tension between two families who had carried the bulk of leadership, and through delegation of responsibilities to other potential leaders.

5. The feared death of the congregation plus Tom's enthusiastic commitment enabled older leaders to accept and follow his leadership and overcome natural fears of change.

6. The arrival of younger members who were ready to lead provided energy to replace the declining powers and activity of the aging members.

7. Readiness on the part of both pastor and people to work within the limitations of the church (e.g., lack of parking and lack of money to purchase land for parking), rather than to give up in the face of them.

Contact: The Rev. Tom Duckworth  
3210 Zenobia  
Denver, CO 80212  
303/477-6881

## **Lents United Methodist Church, Portland, Oregon**

### **A. Profile**

Lents is an old church for Oregon, founded in 1845. Its peak period was in 1948-56, when membership reached 340 and worship attendance averaged in the eighties. It then relocated to its present location. From 1957-1970 there was slow and steady decline in the church, until in 1970 it was made a part of a circuit. There were 14 pastors from 1945 to 1979, half of whom served only one year, the longest term was six years. The consequence was lack of pastoral leadership and irregular worship services, with the result that in 1979 membership had sunk to 32, and attendance ran five or six. What lay leadership there was had been captured by one man, with a chilling effect on the interest and concern of others. The property and the members' dress for church had declined parallel with their sense of hopelessness and poor self-image as a congregation.

In 1980 the church was made a single appointment for a part-time lay pastor. Curtis Kirkpatrick's daily work was an internal management consultant for a large corporation. He brought to his pastoral appointment those skills tempered by his personal religious commitments (which tended to be of the conservative type). Emphasizing hope for the future and committed discipline in the present, he concentrated on providing loving concern for each member and for potential members. He was able to extricate the one power figure from dominance without losing any members in the process.

The church has begun to attract new people—married couples with young children, mothers with young children, and some widows. For the most part they are family-oriented persons of the blue collar middle class. They tend to be lonely, and are responsive to the church's close-knit fellowship and the

pastor's care. The church is now up to 40 members, and it has 60 on its constituency roll. Like most small churches, its activity is centered on Sunday morning, but it emphasizes "Scriptural living" in terms of love of one's neighbor. It tries to support members to live out their faith in service to the needs of others and to their community.

The community around the church was once open country, but is now dense city. Freeway construction came down the middle of the community, which has more apartments and rentals than home owners. Ethnic identity remains predominantly white, several generations in the U.S.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. Growth in membership and activity, after decades of decline.

2. Opening up of leadership structure and increasing of all members' sense of responsibility. Older members are taking their leadership tasks more seriously, and some key new members are moving into leadership positions.

3. Per capita giving has been increasing, allowing the church to meet all its obligations and apportionments since 1980. It has taken on and completed many needed projects of upkeep, maintenance and building improvement. It recently borrowed from the District Church Extension Society to repair a leaking roof.

4. Self-esteem and care in personal and building appearance have improved.

5. Growing dimensions of spiritual nurture of each member (through pastoral care, programs, and carefully phased leadership responsibilities).

6. Higher expectations of themselves, as members and leaders of the church, and as a church.

7. The congregation is willing to consider changing the name of the church, the present name, from the previous community, has some negative connotations to people in the areas from which new members come.

## **C. Impact on the Community**

1. The revitalization of a church that was about to dissolve has been a sign of hope for the community.

2. Members are encouraged to live out their faith in service to the needs of others daily.

3. Many members are active in organizations attempting to

improve conditions in the community and to meet the human needs of its residents.

#### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Strong pastoral leadership given in ways appropriate to the people and their circumstances. Kirk's emphasis on discipline and planning for the future, while "waiting for the Lord" have been well-suited to the situation of the church and to the expectations of its members. His theological emphasis speaks to their needs in a way they can understand. Similarly, his program approaches have been adapted to the special needs of the church (e.g., pushing for increased giving without demanding pledging) as has his work in developing leaders through personal discussion and coaching.

2. Pastor's freedom to commit himself. With a substantial secular job, Kirk's economic needs were not dependent on the church or on the Annual Conference, so he was able to move directly to deal with the critical issues in the church. At the same time, his personal strength and knowledgeability let him take the special needs and problems of people into account, while his personal faith allowed him to move slowly enough to enlist the commitment of the people.

3. The church's ability, given the part-time pastor, to pay its own way has removed the additional insult of subsidy from the burden on the church's self-image.

4. The church was about ready to die when Kirkpatrick was appointed, though it had not formally requested any such action at that time, but the people were very aware of its imminent demise. Thus, there was greater willingness to accept leadership from one who was committed, knowledgeable, and energetic.

Contact: Mr. Curtis Kirkpatrick  
Lents United Methodist Church  
4600 S. E. 97th  
Portland, OR 97266  
503/760-3188

### **Edge Hill United Methodist Church, Nashville**

#### **A. Profile**

Edge Hill Church was founded in 1966, and Mr. Barnes has been its pastor from founding until the present. It has a high degree of intentionality in expression of faith and has deliberately remained relatively small in order to avoid institutional

encumbrances to mission effectiveness. Membership has increased slowly but steadily from 15 to 270, of whom 25-to-30 percent are black, the rest white. Its budget has increased almost every year and the church has gone from being totally subsidized by conference sources to 75 percent paid by the congregation. The staff includes a full-time pastor, coordinator of neighborhood ministries, and secretary; part-time custodian, summer program staff, and supervisor of the feeding program.

Edge Hill is located in a fairly stable, though quite diverse Nashville community, containing both areas of private redevelopment (near the university campuses and the national church headquarters) and areas of public housing constructed during late 1960s. It is close to the recording industry center, borders a small "skid row" and has middle income black neighborhoods on two sides. Most new members live within a mile and a half of the church, especially around the university complex. Single women, some of whom have experienced marriage and have children, and people who have been in institutions are among the types of persons the church has been able to attract and welcome. It also draws a corps of members from nearby seminaries, universities, and national boards.

The church seeks to keep in balance its emphases on its internal life (nurture and maintenance), neighborhood outreach (direct and emergency service community center), and issue involvement (e.g., prisons, hunger). Both issue and outreach activities often result in "spin-offs" such as Manna (an organization to deal with hunger in the community) and a state hunger coalition.

With its high energy involvement in all three areas of concern, Edge Hill members often become very intensively involved—so much so that a degree of "burn-out" seems to occur for some. That experience coupled with the presence of many temporary people in the neighborhood (students, hospital residents, etc.) creates a fairly high level of turnover in a membership that is otherwise very stable.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. Steady growth in membership, even with the emphases on mission commitment central to the church's expectations of its members.

2. Consistent readiness to address the new issues that come before the church in its community and environment (e.g., there is emerging attention to international issues)—and in its members' concerns (e.g., the emphasis on internal mutual support and nurture has been specially concentrated to respond to the perceived problem of burn-out developing among those most active in the community outreach programs).

3. Growing financial commitment to the church and to the community on the part of members.

4. Sustained diversity of people in membership.

5. The congregation is structurally organized for outreach.

6. Edge Hill is presently undertaking a modest expansion of its building to allow expansion of programming, even though it is difficult to make such an investment in the light of its heavy commitment to use its income for program and outreach.

7. There is much small group action, allowing a natural development of people's leadership abilities.

8. The church is open to the emergence of activity of new people in leadership.

9. Worship services are exciting and energizing for members. They build in opportunities for expressions of people's concerns so "it is easy for people to come out of the woodwork."

### **C. Impact on Community**

1. The church is actively engaged in direct service to its community, especially the particular needs of persons in it.

2. The church is involved with a variety of city-wide, state-wide, and even national issues.

3. It has tended to proliferate organizations and spin them off to deal with special needs and/or issues.

4. It embodies in its life and membership the ideal of inter-racial fellowship, even when pressures of racism and the need for separate experiences have pulled in the other direction.

5. Its stable fellowship gives a spiritual home for people whose status tends to be transient in society, e.g., students and formerly institutionalized people.

### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Pastoral leadership that has appropriate and strong vision for ministry in the situation, skills to implement the vision, and long enough tenure to generate high "social capital" with members and with people in the community at large.

2. Very high levels of commitment and ability in many of the members.

3. Location providing real and symbolic access to both the university-oriented and the poor—both black and white.

4. Support by the conference, though it has at times wavered or even shifted to “inquisitions.”

5. Very close relationship between the pastor and the people.

6. Highly intentional blending of internal ministries, community outreach, and issue involvement has given a focus to the church’s life-style, and a clear point of potential identification (i.e., those who responded positively to such intentions tended to be attracted to membership; those who did not found their needed church home elsewhere).

Contact: The Rev. William L. Barnes  
Edge Hill United Methodist Church  
1502 Edgehill Ave.  
Nashville, TN 37212  
615/254-7628

## Section **IV**

# **Congregations Making Ethnic Transition Through Evolution**

Several distinct forms of transition appeared in the study, two representing forms of ethnic change in churches following ethnic change in communities. Three of the churches studied made the transition from white Anglo congregations to ethnic congregations with continuity of congregational corporate identity. In each case the white Anglo group became open to ethnic members, ethnic people responded; the congregation then went through an "integrated" stage, by the end of which ethnic people had taken key leadership and the new life of the congregation as an ethnic one was launched.

Calvary of Detroit and Shepard of Columbus, Ohio, made the change from white to black. Wesley of Coral Gables is a transition from Anglo to Hispanic, although (given the language change) it is much closer to the model of transition through new church development that will be discussed in the next section than are either Shepard or Calvary. It is included here because the host Anglo congregation sees the new Hispanic congregation using its building as becoming the new "Wesley Church."

First, Wilmington, in Los Angeles is another example of a very special transition. The old Anglo congregation became open first to blacks, then to Filipinos, then to others. With ethnic development in its neighborhood, it evolved into a multi-ethnic congregation. The fact of transition is just the same as if it had become a congregation of one new ethnic group.

Despite the special aspects of Wesley and First, Wilmington, four churches showed a basic similarity in several key characteristics:

1. Each of these churches went through, or is going through, four stages:

- a) recognition by the "old" group of the need for transition,

- b) starting up the new ministry,
- c) letting go of the need for control by the "old" group,
- d) handing over of power and responsibility to the "new" group.

2. A significant focus on community ministry preceded the move toward transition and was sustained during and after it.

3. Each church has found its own way through the process. Annual Conferences play supportive roles but manage to avoid falling into the trap of subsidizing.

4. The people, both "old" and "new," expected and wanted to "pay their own way."

5. The process and the new congregations thrived when there was effective pastoral leadership (just as in any new church start).

6. A strong and committed lay leadership led acceptance of the need for transition and preparation for it in the "old" group and was developed to take responsibility for the "new" group.

7. Theological foundations for the process were articulated, "owned," and affirmed.

8. Throughout the process these churches had a dual focus in ministry: outreach and nurture of the personal, spiritual, and group growth of members and of the church.

9. The outreach mission of the churches emphasized both community action/service and evangelism.

10. The properties were solid and appropriately sized.

## **Calvary United Methodist Church, Detroit**

### **A. Profile**

Calvary United Methodist Church is a former EUB church which has made a successful transition from white to black, without needing conference financial aid in the process.

By the mid-1960s the area around the church had changed from predominantly white to mostly black, but the church was still largely limited in membership to white people commuting back to the old neighborhood. Their children joined churches in suburbia when they set up their own households, and the older people were dying off.

The conference decided the church should be integrated and brought a white minister from another city who had led a church there in integrating over a several year period. He

served as pastor of Calvary for nine years, leading it in reaching out to and attracting many of its black neighbors. The last year of his service, just before his retirement, the conference provided a black co-pastor. His successor was there seven years and left to become conference urban missionary. By this time the process of transition is complete, and the church has become a genuine community church. Its membership is predominantly black, and its black neighbors see it as a church of their community and feel a growing ownership of it. Its new members are drawn almost entirely from the black, largely blue collar community around the church. Those joining are usually high school graduates in their early 40s. About half are married, with elementary or high school age children. Others are single younger adults or youth.

The church's primary outreach emphasis is making contact with the people living nearby. It helps meet their needs, and joins them in attacking community needs. The building serves as meeting place for several community groups and programs. The church relates actively with the local community organization and encourages members to become active in their block clubs. It has its own part-time social worker who develops and/or helps to organize special responses to needs (e.g., emergency aid center, parenting classes, child care, hunger abatement, crisis intervention center). Contacts made in this way lead to people joining the church.

The last membership losses by withdrawal were in 1978 and 1979, a total of 43—reflecting the ending of the "integrated" phase. In the five years from 1978 through 1982, 231 persons joined the church, 60 by confession or reaffirmation. In the same five years there were only seven deaths and 82 transfers. The number of regular givers has risen from 95 in 1978 and 1979 to 150 in 1982, contributing over \$50,000.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. New members affiliating. Almost all those joining are coming from the immediate community of the church and similar communities immediately adjacent. The number seeking to join has been rising steadily, with over 20 in the class of adults received in spring, 1983.

2. Growing stewardship. The church has had some difficult times, but it has met its bills in full. A gas shut-off provoked a fund drive in summer 1982, and the church has been paid up on time ever since. Its apportionments are paid in full. A major priority for the near future is developing the stewardship of its members in ways that are appropriate for them.

3. Engagement with community issues and groups. Community leaders now consistently express feelings of "ownership" of Calvary. While not a powerful institution, it does bring its property, staff, and membership to bear on the issues and needs of the community. Its style with community groups and leaders is collegial and it is willing to do both service of personal needs and community action.

4. Response to people. Its program is responsive to the needs of members and potential members, offering a variety of group experiences in which people can build closer contacts with one another. Calvary is working on a major revision of its approach to Christian education to be more effective with the families and non-family adults in its community.

### **C. Impact on Community**

1. A major emphasis of Calvary is support of the block clubs in its area. Many meet there, and all members are urged to become active in the club on their block or are encouraged to start one. It is a major partner of the community organization that is the umbrella for the block clubs and the major advocate and activist in addressing community needs and urging positive attention from government and business organizations.

2. The church is particularly concerned with crisis needs of families and individuals. It operated a child abuse program that was a victim of the Reagan fund cutbacks. It then organized a crisis-intervention center and offers classes on parenting. It supports such activities with a part-time social worker and a special hunger feeding program.

3. Community leaders look to Calvary as an ally and supporter for program development and advocacy.

### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Pastoral leadership. Lloyd Houser provided wisdom in laying the foundation for transition and development of a new black congregation. Ed Millet provided organizational leadership and strong preaching and worship skills that have built the new congregation. Not only were these ministers well-suited to their tasks, but they have been deeply committed. Lloyd's tenure lasted almost a decade, and Ed's is over seven years—with no desire on his part to look for a different situation.

2. Lay leadership. Some key people in the original stages of transition and black church development remain with the

church and still provide strong leadership. New members joining are quickly cultivated for leadership. One of Calvary's major tasks is to identify leadership potential and help people to develop it.

3. Strong identification of the church with its community. It has taken 15 years of intense effort with community needs and leaders to build the new image of a black community church. Persistent emphasis on this mission has been essential for Calvary's present success as a serving and growing missional community.

4. Theological understanding. The foundation for identification with the community was built not so much on the simple institutional loyalty of members (though that factor had a major role in the initial readiness to deal with transition), as on a growing appreciation of God's specific call to Calvary Church to be in mission. Pastors believe teaching that theology is a major part of their role, and have done it well.

5. Timing. There was still opportunity to use the institutional strength of the former white congregation to help bridge the transition time while a new black congregation was developed.

6. Openness of the old leadership to new black members. The readiness of key leaders made it possible for the few black neighbors who ventured in to feel welcome and appreciated, so they could share jointly in the promise of a different future. A central aspect of this, though probably not intentionally planned, was the perception of ethnic transition as essentially new church development.

7. Conference support. The conference made two central contributions. It provided appropriate pastoral leadership at the right times. It also was wise enough to let the church pay its own way—and to move early enough so that it was possible for the church to do so. The high esprit de corps in the church and the sense of ownership in the community are strongly influenced by the fact that Calvary has not been a dependent of the conference.

Contact: The Rev. Robert Williams  
15050 Hubbell  
Detroit, MI 48227  
313/835-1317

## **Shepard United Methodist Church, Columbus, Ohio**

### **A. Profile**

Shepard was a strong white church in a strong white community, 500 members at peak in 1946. Then in the mid-1950's, rapid racial transition began in the community. By the late 1960's the church knew it would have to change. Most of the white members had moved away and started another church in 1968 in a new area. The old core, however, hung on. The conference envisioned a black or integrated future church and began appointing black ministers.

Now Shepard is about 75 percent black and is growing steadily in members and financial support. With a major emphasis on tithing, giving by members has been rising 25 percent per year. Conference subsidies needed for the period of transition have been reduced from \$15,000 in 1980 to \$5,000 in 1983 and are scheduled to be replaced entirely by self-support.

New members are mostly blacks, from either Baptist or Methodist backgrounds. They vary in age from teens to 50s or early 60s. They are mostly working class or lower middle class in socio-economic status, although several are teachers. All emphasize education and respond positively to the strong community service of the church. The change in the community was racial, not economic, and if anything, the relative financial strength of residents is up slightly. Most residents own their own homes and have lived there since the mid-1960s. There is an expanding middle class black community just northeast of the church, where there are no United Methodist churches, so Shepard is reaching out to that community and hopes for an increase in commuting members.

Community outreach includes problems generated by the economic slump, and focuses on emergency aid and help in developing financial self-sufficiency. The church operates a food pantry and engages in advocacy and political action from that base and with other organizations. Scouting, Head Start, and community organizations use the building for meetings, etc. Members are encouraged to be active in the various church programs and in the many community groups. The conference's Black Church Development Fund has helped cover the cost of community programming in recent years. Such aid will continue, while Shepard takes on full support of its internal life.

### **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. **Membership growth.** New members are attracted by the strong worship service, the warm fellowship, and the tolerance

of diversity. They also like the church's strong identification with its community.

2. Stewardship development. Increased giving and tithing have produced larger average contributions and more self-support.

3. Self-direction. The church is planning to take over its own support.

4. Deliberate planning to sustain some measure of balance between races and between sexes in membership, without restricting growth to do so.

5. An active stewardship group helps the church to see its stewardship holistically, including participation and financial support for both the church and its ministries of outreach. During the annual stewardship drive, people are asked their interests on what points of the church's life and outreach they would like to help. Responses are followed up. Retreats are planned with a wider base to facilitate the process.

6. The nominating committee reviews new members of the last two years to try to incorporate them in leadership—and to break down the "multi-task syndrome."

7. In order to stretch stewardship, church members do as many repairs as they can on their own on the aging facilities; they also are developing a preventive maintenance fund.

### **C. Impact on Community**

1. Seventy families per month are served by the food pantry. There is also advocacy with these families with welfare, utilities, etc.

2. Emergency aid and employment assistance are provided to members and others in the community.

3. The church is a center for the community, both as a meeting place for organizations and programs and as a symbol of concern.

4. The church actively cooperates with community groups and other agencies in working for political or social change.

### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Conference commitment to keeping the church functional through transition, by appointing appropriate pastors and by providing funds for subsidy and outreach. However, conference leadership did not apparently always

understand completely what was required, (e.g., just enough funding was supplied for several years to keep the church alive, but not enough to allow development).

2. Strong pastoral leadership, at least since the mid-1970's. Pastors were committed to developing the congregation by attracting new members and by reaching out to the community. Their preaching and pastoral styles were also appropriate to the persons they were trying to reach and serve.

3. Pastoral commitment to stability. When the present pastor came, the church redecorated the parsonage, which had been vacant for three years. His moving in signalled his desire to stay with the church, a desire that is still strong. The difference is marked after many years of rapid pastoral turnover when the church was in decline.

4. A core of members, mostly black but some white, refused to give up and gave strong support and leadership to find a new basis for the congregation. More recently, the folks who kept it together and got it going again have been very positive in supporting development of new leaders and transfer of responsibilities.

5. The church's outreach program gives it a strong self-identity and favorable image in the eyes of the community.

6. Excellent relationship between pastor and church. The present pastor is white, married to a black woman; several other interracial couples are church members.

Contact: The Rev. John W. Edgar  
Shepard United Methodist Church  
2260 E. 5th Ave.  
Columbus, OH 43219  
614/258-8836

## **Wesley United Methodist Church, Coral Gables, Florida**

### **A. Profile**

The Anglo congregation of Wesley had 1,000 members in 1969; today it has less than 300 (and an average attendance of less than 50). By the early 1960's the area around the church received many Hispanic, especially Cuban, immigrants, while its Anglo population began to move out. In 1962 a Hispanic congregation was started. A decade later (after two five-year ministries), 150 people were affiliated with the new congregation. Between 1972 and 1979 two more pastors served,

with some loss of momentum and conviction. In fact, the second of those pastors left to go to an independent church, taking 80 members with him. That left only 37 members in 1979. The conference then sent Benito Acebo back for a second time (he had been the second pastor, 1967-1972). Under his leadership, membership rebounded, exceeding 160 within four years.

Ninety percent of the members are Cuban, most from Roman Catholic backgrounds, though they had become inactive long before relating to Wesley. They tend to be 30-55 in age and come as families. They respond to the celebrative worship style and participation, and to the greater warmth of the United Methodist congregation, in which they can have "family" contact with other expatriates. More recent joiners bring more solid cultural grounding and higher socio-economic status than those who joined earlier. Families are quick to invite other families to come, and such visitors are carefully cultivated (it usually takes about a year of participation before people are willing to break with their Catholic roots and take the step of membership in Wesley).

Special attention is given to overcoming the cultural expectation that only long time members can be allowed to lead. Mr. Acebo emphasizes this in statements and teaching and in leadership of the nominating committee. A recent lay leader was a member only six years before taking the position, at age 35. Twice a year sign-ups on preference for volunteer work provide a basis for follow-up checking on depth of interest and skill. This is used in recruiting and nominating.

Acebo is the only paid staff person. Even the secretary is a volunteer. The building is still owned and managed by the Anglo congregation, although the Hispanics provide half the cost of maintaining it.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. Increasing membership, especially the patient cultivation of renewed commitment from disaffected Catholics.

2. Improving stewardship, from \$15,000 annual contributions in 1979 to over \$50,000 in 1983.

3. With a combination of loans and grants, Wesley is investing more than \$100,000 in the building to make it efficient and adequate for the uses now required.

4. There is a strong fellowship, with high levels of participation, including invitation of other families to come visit and a warm spirit of inclusion of present and potential members.

5. There is a good understanding in the sharing of the building with the Anglo congregation. The Anglos are giving more power to the Hispanics, who are preparing to take on more of the decisions and responsibilities.

6. The overcoming of the time of troubles to rebound and make another strong start in congregational development.

### **C. Impact on Community**

1. Provides a social/supportive fellowship for Cuban expatriates.

2. Recognizes the special problem of youth, who are children of two cultures, and is making plans to develop a ministry with them.

3. In recent years, the bulk of in-migrants to the church's area are from Nicaragua and El Salvador and other Central American countries, to a lesser degree. The church provides social services to these families as they move in.

### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Appropriate and effective pastoral leadership, committed to staying long enough to have a real effect. The early growth followed by the rapid decline, followed by the rebirth under Acebo is dramatic evidence of its central importance in new congregation development.

2. Movement into the community around the church of Hispanics (about 80 percent of the members live in the area).

3. The abilities to do and to lead which many new members brought with them.

4. The willingness of the leaders of both congregations to work creatively at the task of sharing a building, including the apparent "I must decrease, you must increase" attitude in the Anglo congregation, and the willingness of the Hispanic leaders to go beyond the deadening effects of "renting someone else's building, when we really need our own." The current investments by the Hispanic congregation in the building helps to build their sense of ownership.

5. The support of the conference and the general church in grants and loans for building and operation, and the symbolic commitment of the Ethnic Minority Local Church Missional Priority. The people of the congregation appreciate this support.

Contact: The Rev. Benito Acebo  
Wesley United Methodist Church  
155 Pounce de Leon Ave.  
Coral Gables, FL 33134  
305/444-9885

## **First United Methodist Church, Wilmington, Los Angeles**

### **A. Profile**

First Church, Wilmington, is in the harbor area of Los Angeles. It is a long-established church which faced ethnic change in its neighborhood in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Some black households moved in, and so did many Filipinos, largely families of Navy-related personnel. Some started coming to the church. In response to that change, the church began to reach out assertively to its new neighbors and to others who were not its traditional white Anglo constituency. At the same time, it sought to remain attractive to its Anglo members and to other whites who wanted to be part of an inter-ethnic congregation.

The result is an inclusive church. More and more ethnic minorities began to come. Some of the Anglos left, but others stayed, committed to realizing an inclusive congregation. Membership is currently about 50 percent Filipino, 30 percent Anglo, 18 percent black, and 2 percent other Asian Americans and second generation Hispanics.

Ironically, the community has continued its ethnic transition. It is now a collection of Mexican barrios, so the church now has about 80 percent of its members living outside Wilmington, in all the surrounding communities. Most of the black members are professionals (particularly people in education) who have transferred from other churches in which they had been active. Anglos come attracted to the multi-ethnic quality. The Filipinos tend to be younger families with young children, many still moving into the surrounding areas. They come because the church with its Filipino pastor has become identified as a religious home for them as they move to a new country in search of "better opportunities."

A visitor immediately spots the church's inter-ethnic character in the choir and among the ushers as well as among the worshippers in the pews. There are periodic worship, learning and fellowship occasions drawn from the specific traditions of the various ethnic groups.

### **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. The church attracts many visitors who come to

experience at least once its multi-ethnic character. Those who join as members say it is "worth going a distance" for that experience. It is the only really inclusive church in the whole South Bay area of Los Angeles.

2. There is a strong tradition of financial support of the church, with particularly good stewardship by the black and Anglo members and by some of the Filipinos. Most of the more recent arrivals are still marked by a relative lack of education in stewardship received in their churches in their native land.

3. With 236 present members, First Church received 20 new members on Easter Sunday, 1985.

4. Average attendance at worship is 145, just 10 less than the capacity of the sanctuary for comfortable seating.

5. Laity from the church provide leadership in district and annual conference programs and organizations.

6. There is high lay participation in worship leadership. Many persons are qualified as lay speakers, and regularly provide the pulpit supplies when the pastor is away on a Sunday.

7. The church is developing the stewardship understanding of Filipino members through a combination of individual pastoral attention, special programs and personal contacts led by Filipino leaders of the church. The process is put in the context of orientation to living in the United States and participating in an American church.

8. The church plans to reach out to recruit new people in a neighboring community that is becoming more heavily black in population, and which has no mainstream Protestant churches except one Southern Baptist congregation.

9. The pastor, at least, sees that changing trends in population and in recent membership (18 of the 20 who joined most recently were Filipino) may presage another ethnic transition to becoming a predominantly Filipino congregation. While feeling the loss of something uniquely valuable if the multi-ethnic work cannot be sustained, he sees it as more important to answer the call of God in serving the needs of the people God is sending.

### **C. Impact on the Community**

1. The most enduring impact on the South Bay Area is the demonstration that an inclusive group is possible. Secular as well as church groups are encouraged to try to become more inclusive by its experience.

2. As more newly arrived Filipinos have become involved, the church has responded with formal and informal efforts to help them become grounded in their new surroundings. There is a second adult education class for older Filipinos who are not comfortable discussing in English. Work with newer arrivals seeks to address the upward-striving, two-jobs-per-person/both spouses, and rising adolescent delinquency that plagues them.

3. As the area around the church has become heavily Mexican (and Roman Catholic) in composition, First Church is working to relate to its new neighbors, many of them new immigrants, and many undocumented.

a. Service. It shares in a food cupboard with the neighboring Catholic church, and provides child care for the children and English instruction for the mothers as they wait in line for food. It also works with interns from Clermont's urban ministry program, to reach into the community.

b. Evangelism. With conference assistance, a Hispanic minister is now based at the church to develop ministries with the new neighbors. In addition, the church has invited an independent Hispanic congregation with a former United Methodist pastor to use its facilities as a way of building a spiritual bridge.

4. The community is also experiencing in-migration of Asians. In response, the church provides a site for conference and city-based programs responding to the needs of Asian and Pacific Island people, including work with newly arrived refugees (with General Board of Global Ministries funding).

#### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Effective pastoral leadership. This was crucial at the time of the major transition and has remained vital in sustaining the multi-ethnic, high lay responsibility qualities. The quality of the pastor, with his Filipino ethnicity, is of central importance in attracting the growing number of new members from the Philippines.

2. Effective lay leadership, both in commitment and in ability (or willingness to develop). The lay speaker program has been central in developing and sustaining this leadership. Also, it is policy to place one or two new members on each committee each year, so there is always the chance for on-the-job leadership development.

3. The conference, especially the district superintendent, has provided moral and philosophical support and backed that

up with focused program investments in the church's ministry.

4. When the time for transition came there were people of the new ethnic groups who were ready to respond to the church and to its new multi-ethnic character. Other than some of the recent Filipino immigrants, most of those interested persons who have become members were middle class. The pastor observes that it is easier for middle-class than for working-class people to support the inclusive fellowship.

Contact: The Rev. Melanio Loresco  
First United Methodist Church of Wilmington  
928 Lagoon Ave.  
Wilmington, CA 90744  
213/834-6834

## Section **V**

# **Ethnic Transition Through Starting New Congregations**

The alternative to evolution in transition is simply to start a new congregation to minister to a new ethnic group. Quite frequently the new congregation is started within a building used by a white Anglo congregation. That Anglo congregation may feel very supportive and proud of the mission venture coming to birth, but it does not see the new church as its organic successor.

Among the churches in this study, one Hispanic and two Native American churches fit this category. They make particularly interesting models, because each experienced a period of start-up energy, then a period of dwindling, and more recently a re-energizing (almost a re-starting in some cases). Each also ministers to a ethnic group widely spread throughout their urban community. Under these shared special characteristics, several key features were found, which tend to match those in studies of effective new congregation development:

1. There must be effective pastoral leadership.
2. Each church achieved early penetration of the ethnic group as it moved into the community. The more they were able to sustain this (or the fewer other congregations relating to the same ethnic group), the more readily did they achieve renewed growth.
3. Each emphasized meeting the pressing needs of the community and the spiritual needs of the people they sought to attract.
4. Community outreach took the forms of initiation or participation in service or organizing efforts and advocacy, particularly using the connections available to them through United Methodism.
5. Worship, counseling, and support were the dominant forms of their nurture. Their primary focus was on adults, and through them with the families.

6. Each recognized their ethnic group as their community rather than being bound by geographic definitions of parish, even if that meant their ministry had to be area-wide.

7. There was strong investment by the Annual Conference (and by the General Board of Global Ministries or other national agencies). This financial support was seen by all as an investment in a new church, not as a subsidy to a poor ethnic group.

8. In those instances where there was effective multiple use of a church building, the new ethnic congregation had a genuine opportunity to identify its "ownership." Dedicated space seemed to make this aspect most clear.

9. Also, in effective multiple use, the attitude of the "landlord" congregation was strongly positive. These congregations affirmed the mission of the new churches and rejoiced in the opportunity to experience them "up close."

## **Native American United Methodist Church of Los Angeles**

### **A. Profile**

A first attempt at ministry with the growing Native American population in Los Angeles was made in 1964, and as many as 300 people responded. However, the bishop at that time discouraged the effort, believing that the other churches should be able to perform the needed ministry.

By 1976 it was obvious that a Native American church was needed and a new effort was begun. The first pastor was a member of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference on "loan". By 1978, the Annual Conference was ready to have the pastor of this church as a member, so Marvin Abrams was transferred from Western New York to take the post.

The second response was much more modest than a decade earlier. The church's ministry has been further complicated by a series of moves from one location to another, and by the dispersal of Native Americans throughout the metropolitan area (partly a result of deliberate government policy when worker migrations were encouraged during the Eisenhower administration). In addition, most of the Native American people are poor—90 percent are below the Los Angeles poverty line. Many have had a struggle with alcohol, (the church has had a strong ministry with men in a nearby alcohol rehabilitation program). But many of those men move on when the program is over. In general, high mobility has been a problem for the church, particularly with men, but with women as well.

Each move led to some loss of people, discouraged by what seemed to be more "broken promises" by the white church hierarchy. The congregation had to struggle to get above 75 members, but is now beginning to move steadily ahead in attracting new members. Its current location is in First United Methodist Church of Norwalk—a formerly strong, now greatly weakened—congregation of mostly older people. Being forced to share and being tenants were initially serious problems. In the months of sharing, however, the congregations have developed a shared worship service in which Native American traditions are a strong resource, a shared Council on Ministries, and shared Church School (almost all Native American). These steps have helped Native American church members feel it really is a place for them—and could have a future as a Native American church.

Morale is rising just as opportunities for growth are manifest. There are 79,000 Native Americans in Los Angeles, and very few churches ministering to them. Readily accessible to the freeway, the church includes a large sanctuary, ten classrooms, a fellowship area, and a good parking lot. Vans are used to pick people up and a strong ministry in geographical clusters relates the church to the Native Americans spread across the metropolitan area. At the same time, the church continues its emphasis on helping people with basic survival needs and in adjustment in the city. Even though the church has moved, it still continues a "Caring Center" in downtown Los Angeles, providing food (including fresh produce through co-operation with "World Wide Opportunities"), clothing, transportation to health and social service agencies, emergency housing, etc. Continuing the Center after the move puts this congregation's ministry in two districts—a further complicating factor.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. Despite the poverty of the people and the lack of permanent location for the church, the congregation has been able to carry the costs of its program operations. Salary support for the pastor and mission support for the outreach programs are received through the conference and national agencies.

2. A core of leaders has been faithfully supportive, and new members are willing to move quickly into leadership positions, especially those who have already demonstrated leadership capacity in business, government, or community situations.

3. New people are now coming into the church and feeling good about it. The church school is growing rapidly, with 20 in the nursery alone.

4. The congregation draws from all tribal backgrounds, differing economic circumstances, and many ages (though there are few older people, who tend to "go home" to the reservation).

5. Its program addresses both the scattered nature of the Native American population in Los Angeles and its "away from home" reality. The neighborhood cluster ministry will have increased importance; transportation for those unable to afford cars is a major priority. Two vans now do double duty each Sunday morning. More importantly, perhaps, the clusters and other class activities are seen as "a church family" to substitute for the extended family lost in the move from a reservation. Worship life celebrates its Indian roots and draws heavily on Native American traditions and symbols in its expression. The General Board of Discipleship will fund hiring of a program specialist to work with the clusters much more intensively.

### **C. Impact on Community**

1. The scattered nature of the Native American population of Los Angeles means that the community of this church is not any specific neighborhood, but the Native American people. The metropolitan-wide vision of the church reflects that reality.

2. Specific services designed for problems produced by the poverty of Native Americans have been a regular part of the church's history. The Caring Center is the primary focus of these efforts at present. Before the move, necessitated by determination by the city that the church buildings were not sufficiently earthquake-proof, there were expanding programs of day care, etc., which cannot now be sustained; but the concern for and ministry to daily needs for survival continues.

3. The very nature of the congregation, its celebration and use of its Indian roots is a central contribution to the Native American community of Los Angeles.

### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Effective pastoral leadership over a long enough time span to begin to make a difference. Marvin Abrams understands and values his own and others' Native American culture. At the same time, he has the tolerance and know-how to work effectively with the white Anglo culture. Tenure is particularly important to overcome the up-and-down history resulting from too-frequent pastoral moves (not initiated by the congregation). On the other hand, the five years before signs of take-off began may well be "standard."

2. Lack of church competition makes it possible for this congregation to appeal to Native Americans who want to be related to a Christian church but who do not want to have to surrender their distinctive Native American culture.

3. Willingness of the pastor and leaders of First Church Norwalk to move into a shared ministry and to permit increasing Native American presence in program and worship has helped create the current hopeful attitude of being in a future home, not just a resting place. This helps to feed the growing enthusiasm of the Native American congregation.

4. Conference support (and through conference connections to national agency support) was essential for a full-time ministry to develop. Given the scattered condition of Native Americans in Los Angeles and their social situation, a full-time ministry is probably essential to make a beginning. The importance of conference support to this church contrasts with the failure of earlier episcopal leadership to envision a specific Native American ministry and seize the opportunity in the mid 1960's when the response was much greater. In general, the conference has shared the usual white Anglo tendency of not knowing how to deal with Native American ministries.

5. Another negative learning about key factors is the greater difficulty in the mid-1970s compared with the mid-1960s: timing is important. Apparently the Native American presence in Los Angeles is now too settled to allow the surging response that seems to be characteristic of newcomers.

Contact: The Rev. Marvin Abrams  
Native American United Methodist Church of Los Angeles  
12111 E. Olive St.  
Norwalk, CA 90650  
213/929-3710

## **Tulsa Indian United Methodist Church, Oklahoma**

### **A. Profile**

Tulsa Indian United Methodist Church was founded in 1964 to minister to the growing number of Native Americans who were moving to the city seeking employment. By the end of its founding pastor's six year service, it had become a self-supporting congregation, with a reputation for lively and effective ministry with and by its people. In the years since, there have been periods of erosion of that strength and periods of re-building. Consequently the church is not appreciably stronger today than it was in 1970.

Two primary difficulties seem to have been involved. One is the relationship of pastors and people. It is not clear at this point what disruptions may have occurred, but the record shows that with each pastoral change some people left. Apparently much of the loyalty and sense of affiliation generated focused on the pastors rather than on the congregation—at least for some members. The other difficulty is in the nature of the population being served. The church's focus in ministry is on Native Americans who moved to Tulsa, most of them from the reservations and/or communities of Oklahoma. Quite possibly their sense of religious roots and involvement runs heavily "back home" and militates somewhat against attachment in any depth with a church in the city.

The future for ministry, however, looks bright. Native Americans continue to move into Tulsa, so the potential and the need for membership recruitment is growing. The Tulsa employment situation didn't suffer as much as many other cities in the recent recession, so the attraction and the reality of finding jobs remains strong. On the other hand, unemployment and related needs for emergency aid of various sorts is relatively high among these Native American in-migrants to the city. Thus, the church's tradition of reaching out to help meet human needs is very appropriate to the situation and will be much tested in the coming months and years.

Through the years the structure of the church building has given a rallying place and a sense of ownership within the city to the congregation. However, the building now suffers structurally and has become a serious financial threat to the congregation. These needs, though, focus the challenge for growing stewardship and ownership by its people.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. A core of congregation leaders has been deeply committed throughout the history of the church, and still provides strong leadership for the future.

2. People are responding to the physical needs of the building with support in money and in contributed labor to make needed repairs and improvements.

3. Despite some periods of need in the past, the church has been able to sustain its self-supporting character in the face of rising costs of operation.

4. Some new residents of the community are joining, and some older members who have become inactive are indicating they want to become active again.

5. The people of the church come from all the tribes of Oklahoma and join at all ages (from youth to young adults to retired): most have been United Methodists in their former communities, and the church represents continuity for them.

6. The church program presents contact with their "roots" while in the city—Indian roots in the white culture of Tulsa, and United Methodist roots in the secular culture of contemporary urban America.

7. The church is making efforts to meet its most serious problems: an emphasis on increasing attendance, seeking more aggressively to attract new members, developing people's sense of stewardship, working together on the building, and coaching newer members to assume leadership responsibilities.

### **C. Impact on Community**

1. Cooperates with other people-serving agencies in the community to help meet emergency needs for food, financial assistance, etc.

2. Works particularly on helping members and other Native Americans find employment.

3. Symbolizes the rooted presence of Native Americans in the city.

### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. The growing Native American population of Tulsa provides a growing field of ministry and source of new members.

2. The involvement of the churches of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC) in Native American communities all across the state has provided United Methodist roots which the church can work to "plant" in Tulsa as people move there.

3. The movement of pastors, in OIMC traditionally has not been limited to tribal lines. This may well help this congregation to deal with its present inter-tribal reality and that which it faces in the Native American population of the city.

4. Committed lay leadership provides the core of the church's on-going strength. (However, it may be that a tight core of these leaders has helped contribute to some of the deterioration when pastors change and to making it harder for

newer residents to feel fully a part of the congregation—a common situation in all ethnic groups.)

5. Conference assistance in starting a new congregation and, more significantly, on-going forms commitment to enabling a self-supporting congregation and to providing somewhat longer terms of pastoral service than is often the case.

6. Other than the “boat-rocking” at times of pastoral change (a not too uncommon occurrence in the OIMC apparently), the relationship between the people and the pastors has been quite positive.

7. While there is no other paid staff than the pastor, the pastor has been full time. The current pastor has a strong emphasis on caring for people, quite appropriate to the special problems of relocation into the urban scene being experienced by the newcomers.

Contact: The Rev. Roy Big Pond  
Tulsa Indian United Methodist Church  
1645 N. College St.  
Tulsa, OK 74110  
918/834-1956

## **Mid-Hudson Hispanic Ministry, Newburgh, New York**

### **A. Profile**

Two blocks from First United Methodist Church in the city of Newburgh, NY, is a growing Hispanic community. Over ten years ago, United Methodists attempted to respond to this immigration by starting a Hispanic congregation housed at First Church. For the first decade there was no consistent pastoral leadership, and few of the pastors who worked were proficient enough in English to relate effectively to the majority Anglo community in the city or in the conference.

Recognizing the growth of the community and the appearance of other and more affluent Hispanic families in some of the townships around the city, the conference decided to give one more try at organizing a ministry. Esdras Rodriguez was appointed pastor, bringing 20 years of pastoral and leadership experience, effective command of English and Spanish, and special expertise in community organization and in urban ministry dynamics. The chapel at First Church was dedicated to the use of the Hispanic ministry. It was called “The Hispanic Chapel” to provide at least one significant measure of their own space for the new congregation.

In effect, Rodriguez was starting from scratch, and the conference was saying "this is the last time." Only two persons were active members after the preceding decade of desultory effort. Rodriguez approached his ministry as a dual development task—both congregation and community, seeing the two efforts as potentially complementing and supporting one another.

By the end of the first year, people were relating to the congregation. Most who came were families, father, mother and children (or sometimes mother and children with the husband not attending). Few were affiliated previously with any church, though most were nominal Roman Catholics; a few had been nominal Evangelicals in Puerto Rico. Giving rose from \$4 or \$5 a week to \$75 - \$80 per month. The church began keeping books and set a \$1,500 annual budget. Leaders were cultivated from among the new members. Targets were set of organizing as a church within one more year, and becoming a stable congregation within five years.

In addition, a community organization (Fuentes) was brought together to begin addressing the needs of the Hispanic community in Newburgh. A Hispanic Summer Camp was organized, not only to serve children for school vacation activity but also to open additional channels for contacting their parents. In these ways, the church is overcoming its ten-year image of failure. Things are happening. Unchurched people continue to affiliate. The community organization grows and acts.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. The surge of affiliation of new members and constituents in response to the new activity of the church.

2. The growing readiness of the new people to take responsibility, as shown in the improving financial support and in their willingness to take on various tasks. Rodriguez's approach to leadership development is to ask people to assume small jobs they can handle. Then, with coaching and support as needed, they move to more difficult tasks.

3. The new perception of church strength in the community, has shown its support of Fuentes.

## **C. Impact on Community**

1. Creation of Fuentes, providing a vehicle for community people to work together to achieve needed civic and political goals.

2. The new image of a successful church, giving hope that other difficult situations can be overcome by the people.

3. Provision of a religious alternative in the Hispanic community between Roman Catholic and Pentecostal.

#### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. The skills of the pastor in building a congregation and community organization. His competence in English also enables him to serve as interpreter and advocate for many in the community who have trouble with English.

2. The commitment of the pastor to a longer tenure (at least three - five years) to develop this congregation, then possibly longer to build a "circuit" of congregations in surrounding communities under the over-all direction of the Mid-Hudson Ministry.

3. Building an image of effectiveness for the church: "We're here to stay." "We're engaged with the community."

4. Sizable population of potential members. The 1980 Census showed about 3,000 Hispanics in Newburgh, but experts believe it is double that, plus the population in two nearby townships.

5. Positive, mutually supportive relationship between the pastor and the people coming into membership. Rodriguez is the first pastor of Puerto Rican background to be appointed. All the rest were from other countries in the Caribbean basin. As is generally the case in the northeast, almost all the Hispanic people in the Newburgh area are from Puerto Rico.

6. Developing lay leadership potentials, aided by the pastor's deliberate intention and expertise in this task.

7. Conference support, particularly financial, as an investment in organization of both congregation and community.

8. The chapel provides space that can be claimed as its own by the congregation, even though it is rented from First Church.

Contact: The Rev. Esdras Rodriguez  
Mid-Hudson Hispanic Ministry  
245 Liberty St.  
Newburgh, NY 12550  
914/562-0361

## Section VI

# Congregations Revitalized Through Transition

Three churches in the study were good examples of those congregations that had once been “great churches” and then experienced their neighborhoods changing in a way that eroded the basis for their former strength. Many churches have experienced this, but these examples were able to use it to establish a new basis for strength (although the new “greatness” must be measured by different standards than the old). All three churches are smaller than they were at their peak. Two are relatively small today; one is still a relatively large church.

Despite these differences, and coming from three different jurisdictions, all three are marked by key common characteristics which seem likely to be true of any church that is able to use the experience of transition for its spiritual and institutional rejuvenation.

1. They had strong pastoral leadership to initiate and sustain the creative responses that enabled revitalization.

2. They have developed and maintained strong ministries of outreach in the community—ministries that have served as a key point of attraction for new members who may come from many different neighborhoods.

3. The central leadership has been committed to change, both in the community and in the church.

4. There was clear understanding that they were in the process of building new congregations within the on-going organizational and human structures of the churches.

5. The theological foundation for ministry and for vitality was clearly articulated and was held central in the growing awareness of the congregation.

6. Enough of the key “old line” leaders supported the transformations to enable their being undertaken with the active support of the constituency.

7. Each church discovered persons accessible to it who were interested in an activist, "different" church and were able to reach out to attract other members of similar interests.

8. Each had strong institutional support, but received it in different ways, which may be the major alternative methods for a church to be revitalized through transition:

a. *First, Germantown*, provided its own institutional support by starting early enough so that it was still a very strong institution throughout the transition.

b. *Trinity, Atlanta*, had key investments made in it by the Annual Conference and its churches. It had gained respect for its special ministries—and consequently there was enhanced readiness to provide support.

c. *Pearl, Omaha*, also received key support from its conference; however, in its case support was given through its participation in a parish structure with the connections providing inspiration and ideas as well as access to conference funding.

## **First United Methodist Church of Germantown**

### **A. Profile**

First United Methodist Church of Germantown went through a transition from a "prestige" church to an "activist" church. After an initial transition, it has continued to change to meet emerging needs and issues. With its activist style and its lively blending of contemporary forms into traditional United Methodist liturgical order, the church has proved attractive to people who were estranged from other churches.

From 1950 to 1970, First underwent a major transition in style and ministry in response to major changes in its former community, a prestige white residential town, with many locally owned manufacturing and commercial businesses. The church's large membership which peaked after World War II, centered in the owners of those businesses and managers of larger businesses in Philadelphia, or in professionals who worked with those businesses. Members lived in the community a mile or two from the church, but with some coming from further away (including nearby suburbs).

The changes were the movement of younger families to more distant suburbs and the movement into Germantown of increasing numbers of black families, many of them relatively poor. The church unofficially considered moving, but decided to stay and try to reach out to its new community. At first, these

efforts were quite tentative to avoid hurting feelings of key leaders, but under the pastoral leadership of Robert Raines and Theodore Loder the effort became much more pointed.

By 1970, the church had gone through the base transition. A net loss of 500 members occurred in the late 1950s as the population movements accelerated: another net loss of 500 took place in the 1960s, partly in reaction to the new community outreach emphasis in ministry. However, new members received balanced losses by 1970, stabilizing membership at 900.

New members come from a wide metropolitan region, but are concentrated in Germantown and especially Mt. Airy. The latter is a contiguous community that achieved residential racial balance in the 1960s. Many white families moved into that section seeking integrated and lively urban living in a comfortable residential neighborhood. The church has particularly attracted people responsive to its community emphasis and to its innovative, relevant worship and creative modes of preaching. Those persons in turn have become the innovators and workers in new forms of community outreach.

During the 1970s and early 1980s, the church's responsiveness to social needs emphasized women's affirmation and nuclear disarmament. Concern groups for these issues worked to educate the church, to provide change resources to other churches and community groups, to initiate appropriate action, and to build affiliations with other concerned groups. Affirmation of the black roots of contemporary religious understanding and nonsexist language have become guiding principles along with traditional roots, contemporary images, and artistic form, in development of liturgy.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. New members are affiliating, a few coming from as far as 30 or 40 miles away. Over two-thirds of new adult members join on profession of faith or reaffirmation.

2. Strong stewardship. The level of giving by the church today is about equal, after accounting for inflation, with that at its numeric peak about 1950 (in other words, the average gift has about doubled in terms of ministry-enabling power).

3. Engagement with community issues and groups. A part of the budget and special offerings every Christmas and Easter are used to assist groups at work meeting community needs. Many members are directly involved in such groups, often providing key leadership. Work with existing groups leads to members seeing some specific options for new ministries. As

these are tried and become effective, they are spun off into new non-profit sponsorship to permit broader participation and direction.

4. Lively worship. Visitors regularly testify to an "electricity" they feel in the church when they come to worship. Music, preaching, liturgy, bulletins with original art on the covers (contributed by graphic artists who are members), and the strength of singing and participation in prayers, etc., all have their effect. In a church and religious denominational tradition that historically has placed high value on sermons, preaching is particularly important. New styles have been developed by Loder, including dramas, short stories, narrative monologues, and poems.

5. Clergy production. In the last 15 years, 12 members, five men and seven women, have decided to make the ministry their vocation. Three are in seminary (one serving a student appointment in Philadelphia's inner city), two minister in hospital and home settings, one is on the mission field in Uruguay, and six serve local churches. Two of the men and six of the women represent "second career" decisions.

### **C. Impact on Community**

1. First Church has developed and spun-off one major organization providing health care to poor families in lower Germantown, another devoted to education—an urban semester for college students and a GED and job-skill program for adults who have dropped out of high school—and three on housing development. It is currently engaged with five other churches in an effort to sponsor housing for lower income senior citizens.

2. Church members and staff have been instrumental in supporting the Central Germantown Committee, working to revitalize the commercial area, supporting several community organizations, and the Northwest Interfaith Movement, which is heavily involved with nursing home and street safety ministries/advocacy.

3. The Social Concerns Commission carries major responsibility for peace and nuclear disarmament, using materials and programs that worked at First Church in outreach to other churches. The commission provided initiative and information to lead the church to declare itself a "public sanctuary" for Central American refugees.

4. The pulpit in regular and special worship services

and/or lecture series is used to highlight issues and to gain broader attention for needs and possibilities.

5. Groups concerned with community action look to the church for some financial and considerable moral support.

#### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Pastoral leadership. The theology and style of Raines and Loder emphasized community ministry, while building on the traditions of the church's past (e.g., liberal theology, "open pulpit," and excellence in worship). Loder has sustained and refined this approach, which has proven appropriate for developing a new congregation on the foundations and traditions of the old. Long pastorates have been the norm at First Church. Loder has now been minister for over 22 years; Raines stayed nine years; and their three predecessors served 1923-43, 1943-53 and 1953-61.

In addition, there have been staff members other than senior pastors for several decades. Presently there are three full-time clergy persons and one part-time, besides a part-time director of music, two full-time office staff, three full-time custodians, and some part-time financial staff. One full-time associate minister is a woman, who has been on the staff three years (she is the fourth woman to serve as an associate, with the first appointed in 1971). The other full-time associate minister is a black male, the first black minister to serve at the church. He was appointed at the church's request when an associate recently moved to another appointment after serving for 11 years.

2. Lay leadership. Key lay persons saw the needs and opportunity for the church and deliberately sought out Raines and then Loder to respond—and have continued to give them support since. People coming into leadership during the time of tentative efforts also supplied committed leadership. Establishing a rotation system and cultivating openness to new ideas and people have produced a pattern of persons moving steadily into more and more responsible leadership from the time of their joining. Thus, the immense abilities that characterize people who are attracted to the church are harnessed.

3. The "fit" of the church and its community of service. New commitments to action and social concern in the 1960s matched the trend in the younger families moving into the area. With that start, there continues to be a match in style and concern between the church and the human service-oriented people who choose that part of the city for residence. The

established core attracts others who seek the style, support and involvement and are willing to drive longer distances for it.

4. Clergy and lay leadership voice a clear theology on the mission to which God is calling the church and use the experiences in outreach as sources of new insight into that mission.

5. Timing. The church moved transition while there was still much institutional strength (enough to be able to lose members who would have been sources of significant resistance to the new mission if they had remained active in leadership), and an endowment to maintain an edge in ministry.

6. Other than permitting the church to “go its own way” and endorsing the selections of senior ministers and associates, the conference contributed little to the life of the church except for two times of disruption during the 1970’s—a dispute with one associate minister and Loder’s divorce. Each time the bishop was supportive of the church and its ministry. This, coupled with the rising interest among younger clergy in the effectiveness of First’s ministry and its growing sense of its worldwide roots, produced warmer feelings between church and conference.

Loder has taken advantage of this situation to encourage more sense of connection between church and conference—and with United Methodism. Signs of this change are emphasis on the mission support given through apportionments as part of the Every Member Canvass, encouragement of concern for General and Annual Conference issues, and more active roles in conference taken by some members.

Contact: The Rev. Theodore W. Loder  
6023 Germantown Ave.  
Philadelphia, PA 19144  
215/438-3677

## **Trinity United Methodist Church, Atlanta**

### **A. Profile**

Trinity is the second oldest United Methodist church in Atlanta, with a history of prestige (governors often worshipped there) and social ministries (it taught skills to young women during the nineteenth century and ran a soup kitchen in the Great Depression). It sponsored eight other churches and built its own imposing neo-Gothic plant.

As the city evolved, Trinity was left downtown in an area

with almost no residences. Government buildings were its neighbors, followed by businesses, especially those oriented to government or providing services to government workers. The only homes left were in public housing, and most of their residents were black. By the early 1960s, the church considered closing, but at a small meeting of key leaders it was decided to stay and be open to all, actively courting an integrated congregation.

What followed was a ten-year pastorate of a dramatic and socially-involved minister, with some conference support and a number of families from other strong United Methodist churches who came to be members for one or two years at Trinity. Some have never left. The style was one of highly visible activity in and engagement with the community. Many members apparently could not take all this and left, with great holes in the church's financial support. On the other hand, the church began to attract some black members (though with perhaps too much paternalism), and young adult couples with commitment to social action and the city.

The next pastor, from the mission field in Latin America, brought a heightened awareness of issues of economic justice. This precipitated struggles about capitalism as well as concern for the high cost of the building. By the end of his tenure, however, the membership decline had ended—and the church was committed to living in its old building and trying to make creative use of it. At this time a collaboration began with Candler School of Theology, with interns coming from the school for field work at the church.

At this time Trinity is about 25 percent black and 75 percent white. It has 50 affiliate members, drawn from students and faculty at the seminary and other clergy on special appointment. Burn-out of clergy and members under the high energy commitments necessitated by the ministry and mission of the church is a major problem. But a long-range planning committee is working on ministry development; one of its special concerns is ways that people in the church can nurture one another. The present pastor is particularly skilled in this area. Other tasks the committee will address include helping members change their image of the church from "urban" to "metropolitan", from large to small and discovering ways to use and/or change the huge space available.

Carolyn Morris, the present pastor, also brings a much greater involvement in the United Methodist system than her two predecessors had. She sees part of her ministry as helping people of Trinity to identify their "fit" with The United Methodist Church. Similarly, she approaches suburban churches not just for Advance Specials, but offers the channels

and location of Trinity as means to extend the ministries of those churches.

In addition to the pastor, a part-time choirmaster, a full-time custodian, and two part-time secretaries (equalling about one three-fourths time) are paid from the church's budget, along with a black seminarian who works part-time as minister to youth. Other funds come from other churches through conference Advance Special giving (over \$20,000 a year). This income pays salary and program costs for a full-time community minister. There is also a student intern from Candler who works 40-hour weeks in the summer and fewer hours during the fall and spring.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. Stabilized and newly growing membership.
2. Strong commitments to ministry and mission.
3. Openness to new directions for service and Christian growth.
4. Attraction of ordained and seminary persons into affiliation.
5. Emphasis on importance of nurture, while keeping the perspective that nurture is for outreach.
6. Openness to the issue has resulted in people from the gay community coming to worship at Trinity, though not yet joining.

## **C. Impact on Community**

1. Special services for the poor, particularly those in the nearby public housing:
  - a. Full-time minister to the community operates a soup kitchen and a men's shelter program at the church, using volunteers and contributed food, etc., from other churches as well as from Trinity.
  - b. Tutorial and drama programs at the public elementary school near the housing project.
  - c. Ecumenical ministry with two Presbyterian and one other UM Church that provides day care at the project center, a food co-op, and a senior citizens' program.
2. Programming for workers in government offices:
  - a. "Wednesday Worship at Trinity" provides lunch, meditation and music for government workers (35 regulars, 20 more peripheral in participation).
  - b. Prayer groups meet at the church.

c. Building is open for use by the business and government communities.

d. Much personal counseling develops out of these contacts.

3. Ministry to youth, who are primarily black from blue-collar home-owning families some distance from the church. Transportation is provided.

4. In 1983-84 the church developed a campus ministry at Georgia State University (21,000 students), which is two and a half blocks away. The Administrative Council of Trinity voted to staff and support this ministry by hiring a seminarian to be the campus minister at Georgia State.

#### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Strong pastoral leadership, committed to developing a new congregation in a new mold.

2. Fairly long terms of ministry by those pastors.

3. Strong lay leadership both in the times of early transition and in the new congregation that is developing. Many people have very high levels of skills and want to use them on behalf of the church and its mission.

4. Conference support, particularly in strong churches in the Atlanta area.

5. Willingness of pastors and leaders to be "radical," to go out on a limb.

6. Flexibility of pastors and leaders in adjusting to changing circumstances while keeping a basic vision before them.

Contact: The Rev. Carolyn W. Morris  
Trinity United Methodist Church  
265 Washington St., SW  
Atlanta, GA 30303  
404/659-6236

### **Pearl United Methodist Church, Omaha**

#### **A. Profile**

In 1945, Pearl was *the* Methodist church to belong to in Omaha. Its membership peaked at about 1,500 around 1950. Its focus was on service to its members; for instance, its gym was used almost exclusively by its own members. After 1950 the neighborhood began to change racially and socio-economically. There was a steady increase in public housing and in young,

poor, unchurched households; by 1980, 65 percent of the households in the church's immediate area were single-parent.

The new neighbors did not "fit" Pearl, and the changed circumstances reduced the interest of more affluent people in commuting to church there. Membership slipped to 400 by 1970 and 250 by 1980. The core in those years was composed of people in their 70s and 80s who had been members for 60 years or more. As the neighborhood continued to change and membership declined, the dominant attitude of members became the ambivalent one of expecting to die while also wanting to return to "the glory days."

In the 1970s, the pastor who served for the full decade, was actively engaged in outreach ministries in the community. Some tension between pastor and members resulted, but so did new contacts with people in the area, some of whom began to relate to the church. Despite the tension, many leaders felt renewed hope in this process. The conference decided to put major priority on enabling Pearl to develop ministry for and with its community. One aspect of that decision was inclusion of Pearl in a cooperative ministry program then being developed: Renaitre Parish. The parish was disbanded January 1, 1984, and the church is continuing on its own, but the effect of the involvement is being sustained.

With the support of the conference, the constructive ferment and enablement of Renaitre Parish and leadership of the present pastor, the older members have become more enthusiastic about their new ministry and even somewhat personally involved in it, though age and physical condition severely limit what many can do. Newer members are replacing those who are dying. Newer members come from two basic groups: (1) lower-socio-economic-scale single white people, often a single-parent family, usually unemployed or working at minimum wage, and living within one-half mile of the church; (2) black middle-class families living about two-to-three miles away, mostly parents in their 20s, 30s, and 40s. The membership is now about 20 percent black; old-line members express pride in being "the most integrated church in the conference."

The parish and conference support supplemented the work of the pastor with five parish staff people: a full-time secretary, a diaconal minister who directs the neighborhood outreach program, two US-2s (one skilled in work with children, one in construction and energy-conservation), a coordinator of the emergency pantry, and a former conference director of youth ministries who volunteers as director of Christian education. This varied staff made possible a rich program at Pearl of ministries to the community—service, development, and action. The skills and experience of the black church in the

parish was drawn on by Pearl to build its programs to attract black members and to groom them for leadership. Pearl has become involved with all age groups, with many programs for them. These joint activities have continued, since the community outreach program, United Ministries in Northeast Omaha, was maintained after the parish disbanded.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. New members are affiliating, most of whom were unchurched. There is hope the church will show a regular net growth in membership, though the financial condition of the people, particularly from the immediate neighborhood, suggests the financial base will still shrink as dying older members are replaced by newer members. The increase in numbers of young new members makes the church "feel" younger.

2. There is a good spirit in Pearl. It sees itself—and is seen by others—as committed to staying in the area, a friendly church whose people are interested in one another and their community. Members are giving financially at levels above what one would expect they could.

3. Major improvements to the building have been made, contributing to the morale of older members to whom the building is a very important part of their history with the church, and symbolizing to the community the church's commitment to stay.

4. Members who have joined in the last ten years have provided new leadership with strong vision of outreach, helping others to be more open and outgoing. Input on ministry and mission is a regular part of all major committee meetings, and other special planning and training sessions are held to help people strengthen their vision and commitment and increase their skills.

5. The church is now able to struggle with the new issues of how to relate its identity to Renaitre Parish and plan for its future. It is involved in three long-range planning groups: one for parish financial development—sources of new funds for outreach; one for the local cluster of churches—the three in the parish and three others—on how to support one another and specialize in ministries that do not compete in attracting new members; and one for the church on its own building use and on the potentials in house churches, small groups, etc.

### **C. Impact on Community**

1. Parish and United Ministries in Northeast Omaha (UMNEO) provided an emergency cupboard, which enabled many poor people in the community to survive temporary financial difficulties that left them poorly fed and ill-clothed.

2. The energy conservation program (led by one of the US-2's) resulted in weatherizing 40 homes of elderly and poor people and advocated with utilities.

3. Longer term assistance for families with hunger needs is provided by a gardening and canning project. Volunteers through conference connections gave seeds and plowed available land in the community. Materials and instruction, as needed, is given in canning of the gardens' produce.

4. Hunger and economic development are served in the "Multiplication of Loaves" program. Produce from Western Nebraska is donated or purchased and processed for sale by UMNEO. Ten tons of popcorn were sold, and the proceeds used to buy mills and wheat, enabling NEM to make its own bread and sell it to poor people for 10 cents a loaf. This process helps meet hunger needs and also creates employment.

5. The church provides meeting and staff-office space for seven neighborhood organizations.

6. Recreation projects, especially in the summer, are given for children and youth; along with a "Time Out for Moms" program and a women's support group.

### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Conference support. The conference has provided a basic commitment to ministry and mission in and through Pearl, expressed in several key ways. Funds are invested from the conference budget. Channels are provided for other churches to invest money, prayers, supplies, and volunteer effort in the mission at Pearl. Renaitre Parish was created and through it UMNEO, which receives continuing support. Appropriate and strong pastors have been appointed.

2. Pastoral leadership. Roy Seaver invested much time and energy in ministries in the community and built the foundation for later development. Steve Eldred has helped the Pearl members to share in the investment in the community and to rejoice in the returns of ministries provided, members attracted, and new leaders developed.

3. Renaitre Parish. The parish staff supplied mutual support to one another (including the pastor of Pearl) that

enhanced morale and creativity; it provided a range of skills that allowed a broad program of service and action and gave coaching for many forms of leadership development. This is continued in UMNEO. The success of UMNEO, and its cooperative form, attracts additional funds from conference, from other United Methodist churches, and from government and private agencies and groups in Omaha.

4. Lay leadership. The vision and energy of the leaders drawn from Pearl's new members has shown results in planning, in activities and in the understanding and commitment of the old-line leadership, though key old-line leaders also have been critical of the development. But, they have contributed strong financial support and have had the courage to stay with the situation, broaden their understanding of mission and ministry, attempt to adjust to the "strange" organizational circumstances in being a part of Renaitre Parish, and face up to their fears about their deaths and that of their church and even of its building.

5. Broad vision. This factor is apparent in ministry and program development by Pearl and Renaitre Parish. It shows in ability to see the community as a source of support (not just an object of service) and to see potential resources for investment in community development throughout Omaha and the conference.

Contact: The Rev. Stephen D. Eldred  
2319 Ogden St.  
Omaha, NE 68110  
402/453-7440

## Section VII

# Congregations Responding To Gentrification

Gentrification has become a much-discussed phenomenon in American urban life. The term refers to the movement of younger and more affluent adults into city neighborhoods that had become somewhat deteriorated but are marked by convenience to downtown or cultural institutions and/or by a special historic character.

Two churches in the study have been effective in responding to this process in their communities. Their approaches were quite different. Lafayette Park, in St. Louis, focused its new ministries specifically on its new neighbors. St. John's, in Baltimore, deliberately focused its ministry on the two poorer neighborhoods on either side of the gentrifying corridor to which it was related. The strong ministries of each have proven attractive to many of the new "gentry" and valuable to the life of their communities.

This mutual effectiveness is undergirded by several common characteristics:

1. Each church has a strong community emphasis and is clearly committed to staying and to serving.

2. There was strong pastoral leadership for the key transition. Three characteristics of the use of that strength stand out:

- a. Each pastor who established effective new ministries "speaks the language" of the people and uses that gift to express firm convictions.

- b. Each was committed to the community, choosing to live in it although alternatives were available, and to be active in its organizations.

- c. Each had a theological vision of Christian ministry that informed his leadership and which he was able to communicate to the people coming into the church.

3. Each church has appropriate property (one thanks to a fire that enabled more appropriate renovations).

a. The buildings allow heavy community use without prohibitive “overhead.”

b. The buildings have authentic historic value in districts that are attractive to “gentry” partly for that reason.

4. Both churches have strong stewardship emphases in their whole style of ministry which are addressed to their members, to their communities and to their service areas. Their people make a strong financial response so the church is able to build on the undergirding provided by this overall attitude.

5. Each church is able to be self-supporting. Conferences have provided some timely moral support and the key pastoral appointments (and at least permission to be creative), but the churches have produced their own financial support.

6. Their moves into their ministry were timely, putting them on “the ground floor” with the gentry moving in.

## **Lafayette Park United Methodist Church, St. Louis**

### **A. Profile**

Lafayette Park Church is located in the strategic center of one of the major historic renewal areas of St. Louis. Its neighborhood had been running down steadily from the end of World War II until the early 1970s, when renewal began. Actually, the renewing process did not really take hold until about 1976. By that time, the church was virtually the only institution that had remained in the neighborhood. However, its members had not. The listed membership dropped from a peak of 1,500 around 1950 to 550 in 1976—when attendance rarely over 70 signalled that the true membership figure was much lower.

The remaining members were mostly older people who had moved to the city from rural areas about 40 years earlier. They were largely blue-collar workers with strong rural ties. Few had more than a high school education. Their dominant theological orientation was conservative.

Just as renewal of the neighborhood was beginning, Bishop Goodrich determined that some key laity of the church were open to adapting their style to the changing neighborhood and would be supportive of strong pastoral leadership. When Tom Raber came as pastor in 1977 he and his family soon

bought their own home in the neighborhood (the church parsonage was seven-to-eight miles away) and instituted a strong program of outreach. The church was opened to community groups for meetings and headquarters. Activities were developed for children, youth, and adults, especially using music.

In the next six years, 150 new members joined. They reflected the character of the community's new residents—fairly well-educated, middle-class and above, persons mostly under 45, "urban pioneers," fairly assertive in lifestyle. Most who joined had been church drop-outs, and five out of six did not have United Methodist backgrounds. Many were former Roman Catholics. Their predominant approach to theological issues was not conservative. The new members have moved rapidly into the key leadership positions in the church. In the seven years, attendance and giving have more than doubled.

The community base is now well stabilized. Renewal of rundown structures continues, and banks are now eager to invest in the area. New "in-fill" housing is being constructed. Sale prices have moved steadily upward. The highway network of the metropolitan area gives excellent accessibility. The new residents are upwardly mobile, vocationally and in income.

As Lafayette Park has become quite distinctive in its style, it is attracting other people from around the city who want what it has to offer. Usually, these people have been turned off by their experience of traditional church life but are ready to try something new and, hopefully, more positive. They also identify with the urbanity of the Lafayette Park community.

Despite wide gaps in education, socio-economic status, and theological orientation, there are no noticeable factions in the church between old-timers and newcomers. An open and friendly atmosphere prevails. People who visit often comment on that atmosphere.

The church has been paying its own way. The only full-time staff person is the minister, with an almost full-time secretary, a part-time director of music and custodian. Considering the opportunities for personal contact and program development, this staff is not large enough. Also, the building is expensive to operate. Despite the rapid improvements in stewardship and the strong potential for more, there is always a shortage of money to try new ideas, but these constraints are more than overcome by the developing, forward momentum of the congregation.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. Response. This is manifested in the number of new

members affiliating with the church, particularly those from no active church relationship. Drawing people from other neighborhoods as the reputation of the church grows.

2. Improving stewardship. Although the pastor says stewardship is an aspect in which much growth is still possible, the concern and the response in the rapidly-increased giving points to real vitality in this area.

3. Lack of factions. The ability of the old-line and newer members to share the congregation without tensions is remarkable.

4. Enthusiasm. The members' enthusiasm for their church is felt in the atmosphere of worship (the strength of participation, applause). Many like to talk about how much they appreciate their church when they are with other people. It also shows in the readiness of older leaders to encourage newer members to lead—and in the willingness of those newer members to accept.

### **C. Impact on Community**

1. The church is both the meeting place and symbol of the community that is developing. When area residents speak of a meeting "at the church," everyone knows that Lafayette Park United Methodist is meant. The pastor's home ownership in the community is one more aspect of this impact.

2. The church provides major music, youth and children's programs consistently. However, its major approach is responding to the concerns and interests of its members and community residents in developing programs to meet specific needs at any given time.

### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Strong leadership by a pastor whose interests and abilities are well matched with the situation. Preaching, liturgical development, theological orientation, enjoyment of an urban lifestyle, home ownership in the community, and encouragement of growth-oriented program development are all key features of that leadership.

2. Able lay leadership. The first level of this leadership was by the long-time members who accepted and supported the new pastor and the newer members, as they came and began to lead. The second level is the high level of commitment and ability many new members brought.

3. Timeliness. The church's major push to make effective

contact with “new gentry” came just as the population movements stimulated by historic renewal were really taking hold. Lafayette Park was thus able to capture the position of “*the church*.”

4. Fit between church and community. The church as an institution and a building was on the scene long before renewal began; it fitted the image of historic. The church’s use of a traditional basic form for liturgy was similarly fitting. On the other hand, the theology, the up-beat character of the church’s life, and its responsive and community-oriented approach to mission and ministry fit the image of renewal. The church does not emphasize its denominational distinctiveness in a community that does not see much difference in denominational labels, and so is able to attract members from many backgrounds, not just United Methodist.

5. Growth of the “historic renewal” community. The immediate neighborhood of the church received many new residents as the community renewed. Identified with this community, the church is able to grow as the community grows.

6. Self-support. Because of the strength remaining in the “old” church as renewal began, and because of the speed with which newer members were attracted and committed, the church needed little subsidy to become viable. Salary and a little program support on a diminishing basis was provided for the first few years. It was spared the temptation of falling into an “ecclesiastical welfare mentality.” On the other hand, the conference’s rapid increases in apportionment now are cutting into the church’s ability to take advantage of the growth spurt available to it.

7. Leadership by the bishop. Intervention by the bishop made the church try a new tack in mission and ministry and support the new minister appointed to direct it. The bishop selected that minister and found the necessary salary supplement.

Contact: The Rev. Donald Slover  
Lafayette Park United Methodist Church  
2300 Lafayette Ave.  
St. Louis, MO 63104  
314/771-9214

## **St. John’s United Methodist Church, Baltimore**

### **A. Profile**

Through the end of World War II, St. John’s was one of

several relatively prestigious and fashionable Methodist churches on Baltimore's affluent north side. As the neighborhood lost its more prosperous members, poorer families, particularly black ones, came in their place. St. John's and all similar churches began to experience decline. In St. John's case the decline became precipitous by the 1960s.

Today, only one couple and six older people, who still live in the community, remain from the old congregation. This changing neighborhood triggered a struggle for relevance at St. John's. While it did not change the character of leadership in the congregation, it did open the building to growing community use and opened the hearts of some key leaders for the need to go out to minister.

In 1977, Howard Nash was appointed pastor. He had worked his way through school, achieving high academic standing starting from a lower class background. He also brought expertise in community organizing and a vision of a church for, by, and of "the people," a church willing to engage in political action to meet community needs. By that time the first signs were present of a corridor of gentrification running from the center city right up the street on which St. John's is located. Nash and the people he recruited resisted the temptation to focus their energy on that hope of future affluence and chose instead to reach out actively to the poor communities east and the west of the corridor (only two or three blocks from the church). The building was made a center for community activities, both those sponsored by the church and those of many community groups.

Most response came from the heavily-black community to the west, but a number of lower-income white households from the community to the east came as well. In addition, attracted by a church that was interracial, concerned for the poor, and militantly involved in community concerns, some of the "young gentry" began to attend, though they tended to be struggling young professionals, not the affluent, established type of gentry. Regardless of income, most of the new members did not have any active relationship to a church in their recent experience.

In 1981, a major fire devastated much of the building, especially the sanctuary. The church's leaders took advantage of the opportunity presented by rebuilding and by a substantial insurance settlement. A sanctuary more appropriate in size and style was built, and versatile meeting rooms were developed. Throughout the period of reconstruction all the activities of the church were continued in borrowed space.

While the building needs further work, more usable space now provides a much better base for operations—and is a

symbol of the church's concerns and commitments. In addition, wise use of the insurance funds provided an endowment fund of over \$350,000. Invested for large returns, these funds provide the foundation for future development of the congregation and its ministry. It is unlikely that the contributions of members will be able to carry the full cost in the immediate future, so those funds are important. Plans are also under way to develop enterprises to help meet community needs and at the same time generate income for the ministry.

The pastor characterizes Sunday worship as high liturgically, eclectic, lively and in the style of "blue jean sophistication." Preaching is the focus, but the lectionary is used and Bible study is actively promoted. A lay committee helps create materials for use in the service. In general, a high standard of involvement prevails among the members, with deliberate efforts made to cultivate persons' potentials and help them to move into leadership in the church and in community organizations. The pastor is the only full-time paid worker. The secretary, close to full-time, is heavily engaged in community organizing. There is a paid musician, but all janitorial work is done by volunteers. The pastor considers himself as a peer and considers most members close friends: "I just work for the outfit full time."

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. Birth of a new congregation within the building and corporate shell of an old one that has now died. Membership has steadily increased since 1977 after three decades of decrease.

2. Plans for enterprises and looking for a mortgage to complete needed building work in order to preserve endowment funds point to a well-developed sense of stewardship. This also shows in increasing giving by members.

3. People in the church have expressed unhappiness over what they see as reactionary trends in United Methodism. They are responding by communicating among themselves the structure and style of St. John's and its relationship to United Methodism, and planning for increased participation in Annual Conference activities and groups.

4. Because of special effort by the Ministries Committee, many people are engaged in a variety of short-term commitments, even some who are not usually involved.

5. The church attracts across racial and economic class lines and is particularly effective in reaching unchurched people.

### **C. Impact on the Community**

1. St. John's is closely associated with the community organizations around it. Groups use the church for meetings and for headquarters; church members are active leaders in the groups, and church and community people often plan jointly for ways to meet needs.

2. The church provides leadership development coaching and training for its own members and for others in the community.

3. The church's fellowship serves as a bridge between people of differing social groups and neighborhoods.

4. Rebuilding of the property after the fire was a direct statement of the commitment to the future of the area.

5. The church's emphasis on political and organizing activity has helped many to become more active in the community.

### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Effective pastoral leadership:

- a. Vision for ministry in the area and the skills to implement;
- b. Willing to let the old congregation die and concentrate on developing a new one;
- c. Political and community organizing skills;
- d. Flexible, creative, and bright;
- e. Able to build rapport with the people;
- f. Concentrates on developing and enabling lay leadership;
- g. Commitment to this situation for a long-term ministry;
- h. Shrewd financial and building reconstruction management.

2. The fire that allowed rebuilding in a more appropriate scale and that provided the base for the endowment funds.

3. Readiness of members to move quickly into leadership responsibilities and to see their work in community groups and in the church as linked.

4. Willingness of community organizations to work with a church.

5. The openness of pastor and people in the church to the agendas of the community.

6. Lack of conference interference, though some at St. John's feel there has been a parallel lack of understanding and support.

7. Moving with renewal "in the fullness of time." The old congregation had decreased enough so as not to be too big a barrier, the community was ripe for organizing, and gentrification was opening the door to broader social class participation.

Contact: Dr. Howard O. Nash  
St. John's United Methodist Church  
St. Paul at 27th St.  
Baltimore, MD 21218  
301/366-7733

# Section **VIII**

## **Cooperative Parishes**

A form of organizing for ministry that has become increasingly important in United Methodism in recent years is the cooperative parish. Several were nominated, and three were included in the study. They represent three cities in different parts of the country. They also represent three different ages—Inner City Ministry in Des Moines is one of the earlier uses of the form in a city; Kensington Area Ministry in Philadelphia is a few years old; East Dallas Cooperative Parish is even newer. Also, Pearl in Omaha (pp. 69-73) reflects the benefits to one church of participation in a cooperative parish.

While their diverse profiles are interesting in themselves, there are some striking common keys to provide learning for others considering using this approach to improve the effectiveness of urban ministry.

**1. STARTING AN EFFECTIVE PARISH REQUIRES, FIRST OF ALL, A MAJOR COMMITMENT OF PLANNING, WILL, AND ENERGY BY CONFERENCE OFFICIALS, ESPECIALLY THE DISTRICT SUPERINTENDENT.** Without such leadership, few parishes have a chance to begin. That leadership, though, will be largely fruitless if key lay leaders and pastors in the churches involved do not give strong support. The general pattern seems to be one of conference initiative, often in “collusion” with key local leaders, but always actively supported by those local people. This gradually transforms into local ownership and direction. Time spent in careful planning for an effective parish is a good investment by the conference cabinet, for it will reduce the amount of time and energy needed later.

**2. CREATIVE LEADERSHIP IN THE PARISH IS ESSENTIAL.** Each of the three parishes studied had three clear dimensions of such strong leadership.

a) Leaders were “wise to the ways” of churches, able to help people to see the benefits for their churches and their concerns in the work of the parish. They involved members in actions that stretched their understandings, and which they were able to perform successfully.

b) They identified key needs in the community and in the

churches. By focusing on these, they helped parish people to make a real difference—and be aware they were involved with critical issues.

c) They invented or adapted responses to those needs that either brought direct help or incentives or pressure to bear on appropriate authorities to address the needs. They built a track record of success, which encouraged people to take on other issues and built the parish's reputation as a "winner."

**3. THE ROAD TO PEAK EFFECTIVENESS OF A PARISH IS BY ENHANCING THE DEVELOPMENT OF ITS MEMBER CHURCHES IN REACHING OUT TO THEIR COMMUNITIES.** Four effects of the parish seem most facilitative for their churches.

a) The community of mission and the contacts with others, as well as the communications and negotiations involved in starting and maintaining a parish tend to give a vision and a sense of renewed hope to the churches.

b) The parish structure, with its team approach among clergy, is attractive to ministers who want to invest in such a situation. It tends to provide a major incentive for pastoral stability, once the initial turnover is completed.

c) The parish with its conference and other connections provides resources for community outreach, enabling the churches to be more effective and to be more able to gain the congregational development benefits of that outreach. These resources can include finances, access to volunteers, ability to retain special staff, or contact with key decision-makers in business or governments.

d) When any one church in a parish starts to experience new congregational development, it is very encouraging for the rest of the churches. Part of this is the proof that it can be done! It gives birth to hope that "If they can do it, so can we; they are not better than we are." Thus, a parish can strategically pick one member church, help it to experience new membership development, and then build from that to motivate the rest.

**4. FINANCIAL AND OTHER AID THAT COMES THROUGH THE PARISH TO HELP WITH COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING DOES NOT SEEM TO DIMINISH ITS MEMBER CHURCHES' SENSE OF OWNERSHIP AND RESPONSIBILITY.** Indeed, if there is the broadest sense of ownership that parishes can sometimes elicit (i.e., "we own

our church, and we own our parish, but we share ownership of it with the other churches and the conference”), the added resources flowing through the parish are seen by the church as proof of its enhanced ability to find its own resources to meet needs. The church needs to feel it is making its own way successfully in caring for its essential ministry. The parish can be a great help in enabling that ministry, but the new resources coming through it must be seen as the extras God sends to enable even more to be done.

## **Inner City Parish, Des Moines**

### **A. Profile**

Inner City Parish is a cooperative ministry that has been functioning for over 15 years in Des Moines. Largely the result of conference initiative and still the beneficiary of active conference support, the parish has included from the beginning three congregations—one black and two white. The black church decided in 1984 to stand independently, while still cooperating in some programs with the other two churches. The parish area is now about 50 percent black, 40 percent white Anglo, close to 10 percent Asian, with a very few Hispanic and Native American people.

In 1967, the bishop and district superintendent took the initiative to call the three churches together to explore the possibility of a joint parish. With some resistance, the churches voted that summer to create the parish. The votes at the joint meeting were virtually unanimous. At the following Annual Conference, pastors were appointed to the parish, rather than to the individual churches. A joint Parish Council on Ministries, Administrative Board, and Staff-Parish Relations Committee evolved. The other committees of the churches are separate, but do come together as needed.

All three churches had been losing members, two gradually and one—by far the largest of them—very rapidly. The surrounding neighborhood had many needs for service and action, but the churches were not strong enough and not self-confident enough to be able to respond effectively. The creation of the parish had three purposes: helping three endangered churches to survive, ministering to the neighborhood using a style of “in, with and for the people,” and making an interracial witness. In the 15 years there have been periodic disagreements on the necessity of staying together for survival. The black congregation, particularly, had often wondered about always being connected with two white churches, and has now severed the connection. However, disagreements over outreach to

community needs as a primary purpose of the parish have virtually disappeared.

The conference has remained heavily invested in the project. All three churches have conference-wide visibility as special ministries. Their work is supplemented by volunteers from other churches (about six churches promise 25 hours a week of volunteer time for 40 weeks a year). The \$73,000 the church members contributed in 1982 was supplemented by about \$65,000 from conference sources—The Commission on Religion and Race, EMLC, general church hunger funds, etc., and almost \$30,000 in Advance Specials. There has been no equitable salary fund support, however. These extra funds enable the parish to function with three full-time pastors, where none of the churches alone would now be able to afford a full-time pastor. There is also a parish staff which includes a US-2, a parish visitor, and a part-time secretary, with plans for adding a Christian education director.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. All three churches are still alive. If it had not been for the formation of the parish with the consequent conference support, all the churches would have faced sharply reduced program potentials from lack of funds. The largest, which has a very large building and high overhead, would probably been forced into dissolution.

2. Pastors are more interested in staying longer in these appointments than was the case before. The new program opportunities, the community involvement, and the sense of being in significant mission are all sources of improved clergy morale and, thus, longer pastorates.

3. Engagement with the community and its groups, with increased visibility and respect in the community for the churches. Such involvement had been largely beyond the vision of the shrinking and powerless churches before creation of the parish. For instance, they are now working on "Project Jeremiah," which will pair upper and middle class church members with some of the unskilled and jobless lower middle class people and families in the community. The objects are to help upgrade the community people's job and family skills and to bring them into one of the churches.

4. People of both races have worked and continue to work together effectively in the life of the parish.

5. The black church building has been completely remodelled, reflecting both the increased resources available and the

greater self-confidence of the churches as a result of their cooperation.

### **C. Impact on Community**

1. The interracial aspect of the parish is a model and an encouragement for improved interracial relations and communication in the community, which is still largely transitional.

2. Programs have been developed to meet the needs of many people and families in the community—breakfast feeding, an emergency clothes closet and food pantry.

3. Program has focused on children's needs. Recreation and tutoring have been provided to help fill gaps in official and other volunteer programming in the area. In the process, parish leaders have developed strong connections with the schools.

4. The church buildings, particularly those of the two white congregations, have become centers for community meetings and activities.

5. By and large, leaders of groups (both formal and informal) in the community see the parish as a success. It is both a perceived source of concern and help and a symbol of pride in the community's potential.

### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. The most important factor has been conference support—in sending financial aid for program outreach, in supplying strong pastors for longer tenures, in providing volunteers to supplement the churches' own diminished personnel resources, and in providing recognition and visibility for the churches and the pastors as being in mission for the conference.

2. Effective pastors who stayed long enough to become thoroughly familiar with the situation. The parish staff meeting is a focal point not only for planning but also for mutual concern and support.

3. The strong community ministry which has produced visibility and respect in the community—and in the churches as well. There may be drawbacks here, however. Some church members are concerned that the time spent by staff and lay leaders on community efforts has resulted in less pastoral care and up-building of the churches. Given the continuing decline in membership, it may be that the parish has not yet found a way to link its strong community service aspects to a means to

attract new community people into active relationship (and membership) with the churches.

Part of this issue undoubtedly reflects the emphasis on community outreach and the de-emphasis on "numbers" that characterized much urban mission thinking during the period preceding formation of the parish. Or it may be a part of the very structure being used. The primary vehicle of outreach seems to be the parish, yet it is clear that people do not join parishes; they join congregations. What may be needed is a shift in emphasis from survival to growth as the parish's contribution to member churches.

Contact: The Rev. Brian Carter  
1548 8th St.  
Des Moines, IA 50314  
515/288-4056

## **Kensington Area Ministry, Philadelphia**

### **A. Profile**

The Kensington area of inner city Philadelphia is an old "mill town," all of whose mills have long gone, and whose second wave of industry also has left over the past two decades. Historically, it has been a working-class neighborhood which has experienced rising unemployment. Successful workers left during the housing expansion of the three decades following World War II. A white lower class remained. Along the western boundary of the area was a black area, and black households moved into southwest Kensington. For the last 20 years, Hispanic families have moved through a "corridor" to the west of Kensington. At the boundaries between this corridor and Kensington the area is Hispanic.

By the end of the 1970s, there were ten United Methodist churches in Kensington, ranging in size from 35 to 400 members, all but one of which were predominantly white. All were experiencing steady decline in membership. The smallest church, St. John's, had completed its decline as a dying white congregation and was beginning to experience new possibilities as a black congregation. Its pastor had been appointed while the church was related to an old "parish" located in the black community, and centered many blocks to the north and west. Realizing that the proper affiliation of the church was with the Kensington churches, he began having some informal conversations with pastors serving those churches and discovered they shared his feelings of frustration at the declining strength of the churches and the inadequacy of

outreach to community needs. With lower memberships, the churches had declining financial resources and consequently were at a relatively low level in the appointment process.

The pastor shared his findings with the district superintendent, who joined in the concern and began a series of informal meetings with the pastors. Some form of cooperative ministry seemed needed. The district superintendent raised this concern when meeting with each of the churches. By the end of two years of such informal meetings and discussions, the Conference Cabinet was ready to treat the churches as a cooperative ministry. Appointments taking effect on July 1, 1980 were made to the churches as part of the Kensington Area Ministry (KAM)—and new pastors were appointed to most of the churches. Three more were changed the next year. The one small congregation that had not had a pastoral change disbanded in 1982. The three pastors who came into the ministry with least readiness to participate in a cooperative situation were replaced in 1983.

Each church was asked to elect two members of a council for KAM. All did so, some with eagerness, some with a "wait and see" attitude. Each congregation continued to exist as a charge (or as a point on a charge in those cases where one pastor serves more than one church). Each continued to own its property. KAM did not replace any congregation structures, but added new support and outreach.

Structurally, three new features were involved. The pastor who had largely stimulated the idea was given a joint appointment as pastor of the one small church and as director of the ministry. Under his leadership, a weekly meeting of pastors and other paid staff gives on-going attention to program management and development for KAM and to mutual support for efforts in the various churches. The two representatives from each church in the KAM Council became the governing body of KAM, electing four officers from among the pastors and members of the churches (with the pastors serving as ad hoc nominating committee, at the request of the council).

Ecumenical coordination and communication came through pastors' participation in two ministeriums whose areas overlap KAM. While the statement of purpose is only now being formalized as KAM incorporates and writes-by-laws, there is general understanding by leaders that KAM seeks to forward the welfare and ministry of each member church and to provide extended ministries to the community that can only be done with joint resources.

In 1983 one of the conference's two Hispanic churches in Philadelphia moved from the building which it had been using for several years. It had been a "tenant" there; the area around

the building had a shrinking Puerto Rican population. The church moved to a building made available by a small white congregation that had disbanded after several years of unsuccessfully trying to use its dying strength to start a spin-off Hispanic congregation. This location is in the heart of the "Fifth Street Corridor" of Hispanic growth, and not far from the children's hospital and the area served by KAM. Its pastor has become a regular member of the KAM staff.

Thus, there is now a ministry of ten churches—eight virtually all white in membership (and in community served, although Hispanics are moving in all along the western border), one predominantly black in membership (with a stable black community nearby and early stages of gentrification on the other sides of the church), and the one Hispanic congregation just now coming into participation (in a heavily Hispanic community). The parish strengthens the ministry and mission of each congregation; it develops and finds funding for new programs of outreach to community needs, and it sponsors some joint worship and other interchurch functions to symbolize the cooperation that exists.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. All but one of the churches are still in ministry, and there is general feeling that without KAM several more of them also would have dissolved. The only church in which the renewal process is developed enough to show any upward trend in membership is St. John's where growth has appeared in the last two years. But at the others a new sense of potential and strength is felt by many of the lay leaders.

2. Stronger pastoral appointments have been possible, partly because of greater financial resources made available by the conference. Another important factor in attracting pastors is the mutual support available and excitement about participating in an important and potent venture. In fact, the "buy-in" of churches largely has related to their feelings about the pastor appointed to them. They seem to identify KAM as a source of influence with the conference.

3. Churches that were resistant are becoming positive as they experience direct benefits from KAM. For instance, one of the two "larger" churches was skeptical until KAM sent a seminarian to take communion to all its shut-ins. The largest single fear was that KAM was really just a means to force closing or merger of congregations, but this worry has dissipated by the benefits coming through KAM's aid.

4. New programming is helping the churches serve their

members and reach out to their communities. Youth retreats, a children's summer camp, and special seasonal observances (including a Lenten devotional booklet written by people in the churches and published in mimeograph form by KAM) are sponsored jointly. No member churches had the strength to sponsor these independently. New volunteers from other churches and channels to special funds have enabled two new vacation Bible schools to be started.

5. Planning is beginning to develop for differentiated ministries among the churches. This recognizes that while community outreach projects can and often must be done cooperately, people join congregations, not denominations or cooperative ministries, and churches with different styles will be able to attract and minister to a wider spectrum of people.

### **C. Impact on Community**

1. Pastoral care at St. Christopher's Hospital has two major effects. Its primary function is ministering to children and their families during hospitalization. While many of the people served come from outside the area, some of the children and many of the staff affected are from Kensington. The hospital has announced plans to move to a suburban location. KAM's identification in the situation provided a focus for community concern on how to convince the hospital to stay or to compensate for its departure in other ways. This involved discussions with the other two hospitals in the area.

2. Emergency services are provided for many individuals and families. They are not publicized but are offered on referral from pastors, members, community agencies, etc. Food, clothing and some housing are supplied in emergencies. Materials and labor are given to assist in emergency repairs.

3. Three gyms have been opened for youth recreation programs in an area that has been greatly deficient in such resources.

4. A socialization/friendly meal program has been started with boarding home residents. Contact begins even before the patients are discharged from the state hospital. There are many such homes in the Kensington area.

5. KAM works with various community groups to advocate for city and other government response to area needs. It has growing visibility and respect. It is gearing up to provide support for lower income persons who are threatened by displacement by the gentrification now spreading into the southern end of the area. At the same time, it has selected one

congregation to focus on program development and outreach to meet the spiritual and community needs of the new population beginning to move in.

#### **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Leadership by the director. Joe Tyson had the vision and initiative to grasp the potential for KAM and has shown the creativity and persistence needed to make it work. Chairperson of the Conference Urban Commission at the same time, he has been particularly well placed to put KAM in touch with conference resources and to know the best directions to take to develop Advance Special support.

2. Cabinet support. The initiative and effort of the district superintendent were essential in bringing about creation of KAM. The cabinet played a key role in establishing it. In selecting new pastors for KAM, it tries to be sure the pastor understands and wants to serve in a cooperative ministry; it consults with KAM in the process. The district superintendent also consults informally with the director before doing anything in the churches.

3. Conference financial support. In 1984 a total of \$21,000 was provided by Equitable Salaries, \$7,500 by the Urban Commission, \$5,000 by chaplaincy, and over \$15,000 through Advance Specials. These funds have enabled both the pastoral leadership needed for response to the mission opportunities and much of the program development for outreach KAM has generated. It should be noted that while this support totals almost \$50,000, the churches are paying over \$42,000 in apportionments.

4. Pastoral missional understanding. Each of the pastors appointed to KAM came with a theological commitment to mission in the inner-city and with some understanding, and willingness to learn more of the dynamics of urban life.

5. Key features in design. The "authoritarian" mode of creation by cabinet has been balanced by an operating style that allowed each church to move voluntarily into commitment to KAM and/or to any of its programs. The clear assignments of pastors to individual churches and the retention of building ownership and responsibility by the congregations has undercut the fear of forced death or merger. Thus, people active in KAM see all the energy they expend for it as benefiting their local churches, not as a distraction from them. Provision of vacation/sickness substitutes for worship and pastoral care (without cost to the church) helps churches to see they receive

more in pastoral attention because of KAM than they lose because of their pastor's involvement in its programs.

6. Facilitating features in design. Two of the new features that were built into the ministry have been important to its development. One began by design, the other, by creative opportunism. The conference recognized KAM, from its inception, as a Conference Advance Special. The director and other persons from KAM told its story to more affluent churches to generate the added income needed to support new outreach ventures in the community. At the time KAM was created, the children's hospital bought one of the churches for an expansion program and allowed its congregation to worship in the hospital chapel as part of the arrangement. While that was the congregation that subsequently disbanded, the connection allowed KAM to coordinate the ecumenical chaplaincy at the hospital. That position helped build relationships with other clergy and with community organizations and people. And it has opened a new channel for funding from the conference's Chaplaincy funds.

Contact: The Rev. H. Joe Tyson  
1109 N. 3rd St.  
Philadelphia, PA 19100  
215/627-7298

## **East Dallas Cooperative Parish**

### **A. Profile**

North Texas Conference in recent years has placed special emphases on ministries in transitional communities and on use of cooperative ministries to strengthen the outreach of churches. Studies pin-pointed the East Dallas area as a critical one for transition, in part ethnic and in part socio-economic. There were seven United Methodist churches in the area, all but one of which were steadily eroding in membership. At least one of the pastors had already concluded there should be a cooperative parish, based on prior experience in inner-city ministry and perceptions of the changes occurring in his area.

Supported by the Division of Transitional Communities in the Conference Board of Church Development, the district superintendent worked with the churches and pastors. When preliminary meetings developed no models from among the pastors, the district superintendent provided a basic model for a cooperative parish. By the spring of 1982, four of the churches formally had agreed to participate, and by June, the other three voted to join. The parish's official beginning was July 1, 1982.

The agreed purpose, which written into the by-laws, was to strengthen the churches and their ministry of outreach into the East Dallas community. It was generally hoped that the experience of working together and the added program strength it would bring would help each church to experience renewal and revitalization. Oversight was vested in a Parish Council of 17 persons—the pastor and one lay person from each church, the district superintendent, the conference director of church development, and a representative of the Conference Division of Transitional Communities.

The churches voted to work within a suggested structure, but *all* program development has been at the grassroots level by the Parish Council. The basic design for the program was worked out by the Parish Council with the guidance of a community consultant.

An aggressive approach to community outreach was enabled by generous funding. One church in the conference (Highland Park, Dallas) funded the full \$50,000 administrative and operations budget for the first year. With this backing and with a creative full-time community consultant, the parish embarked on strong outreach programs. It divided the parish area into seven service areas—one around each of the churches—then tried to develop at least one significant new program of service and/or action in each area. Special cooperation with other denominations, government and private agencies, etc. was pursued. Funding not only from churches, but from individuals, corporations, and foundations was sought for specific programs. Volunteers from churches all around the Dallas area were recruited to help in the programs. Under the guidance of the community consultant, “think tanks” generated ideas for ministry, such as developing an umbrella non-profit corporation to help people start their own businesses and improve community economic development.

An explosion of new programs produced some immediately visible results and laid foundations for on-going development of community outreach/service ministries. Demonstrations of successes and identification of attractive new potentials for ministry secured more funding commitments. The second year budget expects another \$40,000 from Highland Park, \$10,000 each from The General Board of Global Ministries EMLC and conference, \$12,000 from member churches, and \$78,000 from businesses, foundations, etc.

## **B. Signs of Vitality**

1. To some degree hope had died in all of the churches, with their failures becoming their most visible “accomplishments.” Some had almost decided they must die, but now hope is being

re-born, and the churches are seeing they have a future in ministry after all. Week-long community activity in the churches has revitalized their worship on Sundays.

2. Each church is planning for its future ministry with the help of the community consultant. Special potentials in ministries of outreach and growth are being chosen.

3. The parish has started ministries to two new congregations; one Hispanic and one Cambodian, each with a full-time staff person.

4. Commitment to the parish has grown among church members, even though some pastors initially were resistant to the new situation. At the end of the first year there were some appointment changes. The pastors have started meeting regularly as a parish staff, along with the other professionals in the parish.

5. Signs are that pastoral commitment to the ministry in East Dallas and corresponding desires for long tenure have been rising.

## **C. Impact on Community**

1. At Munger Place Church an emergency service program has grown from a small pantry to the largest emergency service program in the city. It had 100 families a week after one year; 50 volunteers come from 12 congregations of four denominations. Funds come from individuals and foundations; food, gasoline, and bus tickets are included in services provided.

2. Other programs at other churches: Crime Watch, code enforcement, clean-up campaigns, a job bank, a job-skill development/job-finding program at the Cambodian congregation (with \$70,000 foundation funding due to come in).

3. Social services to plug gaps unmet by other sources are provided, plus working with people to address community needs, e.g., code-enforcement, and programs aimed at community development, e.g., economic development.

## **D. Key Factors Contributing to Success**

1. Conference initiative and support. Under the leadership of the district superintendent, conference "diagnosed" the need and made efforts to create. It provided sufficient start-up financial resources to allow participation in a potential "winner," rather than just pooling weakness in a group of weak churches. If the links to other churches for volunteers and money are also seen as conference participation, the input becomes essential.

2. Cabinet intent and collaboration about making appointments within the parish. Long-term pastoral leadership prepared to take advantage of the openings to the community the outreach programming provides is essential. Readiness to cooperate, desire to be part of a team ministry and to be in the heart of the city in ministry are important.

3. The parish provides a combination of hooking the churches together for greater effectiveness in outreach along with autonomy in on-going church life. This has facilitated a sense of "ownership" by the churches, enough so that they hoped to contribute \$12,000 to the second year budget.

4. The parish has used much volunteer and clergy time from among the member churches, not for "parish activities," but for the community outreach programming based in the various churches. This ties the time and effort to the value of "riding a winner."

5. The extent of funding available and the generally high level of morale and self-confidence among Dallas area United Methodists allowed the parish to think "big" in its projects, and to perform big.

6. From the beginning the emphasis has been on the literal, traditional meaning of parish as the territory around each church, not on an organizational entity. Each church has its own defined service area, through which the outreach ministries of the parish are deployed. This helps to keep the churches and their people focused on outreach and on the parish organization as a vehicle to strengthen their ministry to their area.

7. The community consultant is a primary source of creative thinking for program development and resource identification for the parish. The initial positive impact of outreach planning is now being extended as he works as a planning consultant with each church, helping it coordinate plans through the medium of the parish. In the third year of operation his role is being reduced, and a full-time administrative assistant is being added to staff to emphasize the planning function.

Contact: The Rev. Clayton Lewis (Parish Council Chair)  
Munger Place United Methodist Church  
P. O. Box 64725  
Dallas, TX 75206  
214/823-9929

THEOLOGY LIBRARY  
CLAREMONT, CALIF.